India Studies in Business and Economics

Babita Bhatt
Israr Qureshi
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Social Entrepreneurship and Gandhian Thoughts in the Post-COVID World

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To Gandhian social entrepreneurs and progressive communities for prefiguring Sarvodaya through Antyodaya.

Preface

It is with great pleasure, humility and gratitude that I present to you this edited book, which is not only a professional endeavor but also a deeply personal journey. Throughout my life, I have been inspired by the profound thoughts and views of Mahatma Gandhi on village-centric development, which have shaped my perspectives early on and influenced my research orientation for the last 15 years.

My first encounters with Gandhian thoughts and views were during my childhood visits to Anandwan, and later to Sewagram Gandhi Ashram during my late teens. I was also inspired by the remarkable work being done by Prakash Amte at Hemalkasa, and had the opportunity to witness his efforts in 1985. These early experiences gave me a glimpse of indigenous communities engaged in commoning in Gadchiroli district, which left a lasting impression on me.

During my schooling and undergraduate years, my engagement with the National Service Scheme exposed me to various Gandhian programs, including constructive works. Later, as a geologist traveling across India, I witnessed various social issues and innovative projects aimed at addressing them. However, it wasn't until I completed my doctoral studies in organization studies in 2008 that I was equipped to make philosophical sense of the diverse Gandhi-inspired constructive programs being implemented by some remarkable social organizations.

My research took me to remote villages in India, and between 2008 and 2022, I visited and stayed in over 2000 villages, some of them multiple times. During these visits, I had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the wicked social issues of poverty and marginalization being addressed by some of the most dedicated organizations. I am indebted to these organizations for the invaluable lessons I have learned from their work. While it is not possible to list all of them here, I have been profoundly influenced by organizations such as ASSEFA, BAIF, Barefoot College, BASIX, Development Alternatives, Digital Green, Drishtee, Ekgaon Technologies, PRADAN, SELCO, SEWA, Seva Mandir, and Srijan, among others.

I have also had the privilege of interacting with some of the greatest minds and souls in the development sector in India. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn from visionaries like P.V. Satheesh, founder of Deccan Development Society, and Ela Bhatt, founder of SEWA, both of whom recently left us. I have also had the

honor of meeting with S. Loganathan, founder of ASSEFA, whom I consider a true *Antyodaya* leader and a tireless visionary in his efforts to help the most marginalized. Mr. Mohan Hirabai Hiralal, who embodies Gandhi's concept of *Sahyogi Mitra*, has been a catalyst behind the Maha Gramsabha movement in Central India. My interactions with him have been enriching.

My interactions with such dedicated Gandhians over the last one and a half decades, and in some cases even longer, inspired me to initiate this edited book on Gandhian thoughts and their relevance in today's world. However, this book would not have come to fruition without the invaluable contributions of esteemed development professionals and social activists who have dedicated their lives to the development sector. I express my deepest gratitude to Mr. Vijay Mahajan, Ms. Aruna Roy, Dr. Harish Hande, Mr. Ajay Mehta, Mr. Satyan Mishra, Mr. Loganathan Kumar, Ms. Pallavi Varma Patil, and Dr. Chetan Solanki for sharing their profound wisdom and experiences in the development sector. Their lifetime of work and expertise has enriched the content of this book and made it more comprehensive and meaningful.

In addition, I feel fortunate to have renowned Gandhian scholars as contributors to our chapters. Dr. Somnath Ghosh, Dr. Sudarshan Iyengar, Dr. Suraj Jacob, Dr. John Moolakkattu, and Dr. Sujit Sinha have graciously shared their scholarly insights, adding depth and academic rigor to the book. Their expertise and profound understanding of Gandhian philosophy have been invaluable in shaping the content of this book.

Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to other social entrepreneurs who have not been directly involved in this book as contributors but have nevertheless helped shape my views through their inspiring conversations. Mr. Deep Joshi, co-founder of PRADAN, Mr. Rikin Gandhi, founder of Digital Green, Mr. Vijay Pratap Singh Aditya, co-founder of Ekgaon Technologies, and Mr. Ved Arya, founder of Srijan, have all shared their unique perspectives and insights, which have enriched my understanding of Gandhian thoughts and their contemporary relevance.

Lastly, I humbly offer this book as a homage to the exemplary work carried out by the esteemed *Antyodaya*[1] leaders and dedicated Gandhians. Their relentless efforts to empower the marginalized and uphold the values of truth, nonviolence, and social justice are truly commendable. It has been a dream to compile this book, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to do so. It is with great humility that I present this book as a token of my appreciation and gratitude to these esteemed individuals who have inspired me and countless others with their unwavering commitment to Gandhian principles.

Canberra, ACT, Australia Israr Qureshi
[On behalf of the editorial team]

[1] In the preface and throughout this book, I submit that the term *Antyodaya* is used in the noblest sense as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi, referring to the upliftment of the most marginalized members of society.

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Abbreviations

ACTs	Action Consulting Teams
AGLED	Agricultural, Livestock and Enterprise Development
AIACA	All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association
AMC	Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation
AMG	Avoid, Minimize and Generate
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife
AP	Andhra Pradesh
APMAS	Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society
AQI	Air Quality Index
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
ASSEFA	Association for Sarva Seva Farms
B-A-LAMP	Basix Academy for Livelihood and Microfinance Promotion
BASICS	Bhartiya Samruddhi Investments and Consulting Services
BEE	Bureau of Energy Efficiency
BFM	Basix Farmers Market
BGREI	Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India
BKSL	Basix Krishi Samruddhi Ltd.
BQRs	Basix Quarterly Reviews
BSFL	Bhartiya Samruddhi Finance Limited
CBEs	Community-Based Enterprises
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
CDD	Community-Driven Development
CEE	Centre for Environment Education
CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
CFL	Compact Fluorescent Light
CfAT	Center for Appropriate Technology
CGAP	Consultative Group to Assist the Poor
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CLBRC	Community Learning and Business Resource Center
CO_2	Carbon dioxide
COP	Conference of the Parties

COP	Cost of Production
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CSCs	Common Service Centres
CSE	Centre for Science and Environment
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CTARA	Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas
OLPC	One Laptop per Child
CTR&TI	Central Tasar Research and Training Institute
DG	Digital Green
DFL	Disease-Free Laying
DPSP	Directive Principles of State Policy
DRCSC	Development Research and Communications Services Centre
DRDA	District Rural Development Agency
ENRE	Ecology and Natural Resource Education
ESCs	Energy Service Centers
EOT	Employee Ownership Trust
FIs	Financial Institutions
FLWs	Frontline Workers
FPCs	Farmers' Producer Companies
FPO	Farmer Producer Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GoI	Government of India
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HR&IDS	Human Resource and Institutional Development Services
IANS	Indo-Asian News Service
IASEW	Indian Academy of Self-Employed Women
ICCO	Interchurch Organization for Development Corporation
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDBI	Industrial Development Bank of India
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFS	Inclusive Financial Services
IGS	Indian Grameen Services
IIFM	Indian Institute of Forest Management
IIMA	Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad
IIT	Indian Institute of Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILRT	Institute for Livelihood Research and Training
INRM	Integrated Natural Resource Management
IRDAI	Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India
IRMA	Institute for Rural Management Anand
IT	Information Technology
ITDA	Integrated Tribal Development Agency
IVRS	Interactive Voice Response System

KKB	Kishore Kishori Bahini
KPS	Kesla Poultry Samiti
LABs	Local Area Banks
LED	Light-Emitting Diode
LPs	Livelihood Points
M.I.T	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MBTs	Mutual Benefit Trusts
MEG	Micro Enterprise Groups
MFIN	Microfinance Institutions Network
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Act
MKSS	Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan
MoRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MPWPCL	Madhya Pradesh Women's Poultry Cooperative Ltd.
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NBFC	Non-Banking Finance company
NCSTC	National Council for Science and Technology Communication
NFSA	National Food Security Act
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIFT	National Institute of Fashion Technology
NPM	Non-Pesticidal Management
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NSDC	National Skill Development Corporation
NWDB	National Wasteland Development Board
OTELP	Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihood Programme
PCBs	Printed Circuit Boards
PRADAN	Professional Assistance for Development Action
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
RBI	Reserve Bank of India
RCTs	Randomized Controlled Trials
RKVY	Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana
RRPs	Rural Retail Points
RTI	Right to Information
RUDI	Rural Distribution
SCT	Social Contract Theory
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEBI	Securities and Exchange Board of India
SELCO	Solar Electric Lighting Company
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
SGMH	SEWA Gram Mahila Haat
SGSY	Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
SHGs	Self-Help Groups
SIDBI	Small Industries Development Bank of India
SIFFs	South Indian Federation of Fishermen's Societies
SJSK	Sarwa Jana Seva Kosh

SMS	SEWA Manager Ni School
SMS	Short Messaging Services
SMTs	Self-Managed Teams
SNFL	Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd.
SNP	Slum Networking Program
SODIS	Solar Water Disinfection
SPES	Spirituality in Economics and Society
STFC	SEWA Trade Facilitation Centre
SWRC	Social Work and Research Centre
TDF	Tasar Development Foundation
TISS	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
VOs	Voluntary Organizations
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview

Babita Bhatt, Israr Qureshi, Dhirendra Mani Shukla, and Vinay Pillai

The world has enough for everyone's needs, but not everyone's greed

M. K. Gandhi

1 Introduction

The contemporary world is facing various crises that pose significant threats to its stability and sustainability. These crises encompass socio-economic inequality, marginalization, climate change, and the threat of pandemics (Bapuji et al., 2020; Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Bhatt, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023; Faraj et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018b, 2023, this volume; Spicer, 2020; Sutter et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2021; Zheng & Walsham, 2021). These challenges are compounded by the growing income and wealth gap that undermines social order (Bapuji, 2015; Elmes, 2018; Riaz, 2015) and the prevalence of greed, profiteering, price gouging, and economic manipulation that pose significant threats to both the economic system and social justice (cf. Chowdhury, 2021; Downey & Strife, 2010; Worthy, 2008). A significant segment of the population is dehumanized through marginalization, discrimination, and cyber ostracism, exacerbating the already entrenched social and economic

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inequality (Bhatt, 2017; Bhatt et al., 2022; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2017, 2018a, 2020, 2022a). In addition, the wasteful lifestyle, consumerism, and addiction to fossil fuels under the garb of progress and development further undermine the planet's ecological balance (Bansal et al., 2014; Parth et al., 2021; Scherer & Voegtlin, 2020; Wang et al., 2022). The current trend of pursuing growth and consumption at the expense of environmental preservation poses a severe threat to the planet's future (Foster, 2012; Hickel, 2019; Zink, 2019). It is imperative to recognize that the current model of development, which prioritizes profit over social welfare and environmental stewardship, is fundamentally unsustainable and is likely to lead to severe consequences in the medium to long run.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that the current trajectory of development is exploitative and unsustainable. Traditional models of development have been focused on economic growth at the expense of social and environmental concerns. As a result, we are seeing rising inequality, marginalization, and environmental degradation. To address these pressing issues, there is a need for a fundamental shift in the way we approach development (Hickel, 2019; Kallis, 2011; Zink, 2019). One promising direction for change is social entrepreneurship (Bhatt et al., 2019; Battilana et al., 2015; Hota et al., 2021, 2023; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b; Qureshi et al., 2016; Teasdale et al., 2023). Social entrepreneurship is the process of addressing social issues using innovative business models, keeping social value creation at its core (Bhatt et al., 2019; Bhatt, 2022; Hota et al., 2019, 2023; Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013a, b; Miller et al., 2012). Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurs are driven by goals of addressing pressing social and environmental issues (Parthiban et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021a, 2022b; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017; Zainuddin et al., 2022).

1.1 Potential Possibilities Through Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurs help communities create commons through the process of *commoning* (Bhatt et al., 2023; Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Qureshi et al., 2022b), which includes activities, norms, and relationships for collectively managing and governing shared resources, such as indigenous knowledge, land, water, and forests (Bollier & Helfrich, 2015; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Qureshi et al., 2022b). Social entrepreneurs facilitate this process by creating discursive spaces, providing technical assistance, and engaging in other forms of capacity building (Bhatt et al., 2023; Kumar et al., this volume; Qureshi et al., 2022b). They also help communities leverage their skills, resources, and innovative ideas through social intermediation and market linkages (Kistruck et al., 2013a; Pillai et al., 2021b; Bhatt et al., this volume). Social intermediation involves structuring transactional activities in such a way that marginalized communities receive the most benefit from a transaction (cf. Kistruck et al., 2013a), resulting in more inclusive markets (Bhatt et al., 2022; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume). Through efficient market linkages, social entrepreneurs help

small-scale producers access formal markets, thereby increasing their incomes and improving their livelihoods (Bhatt et al., 2022; Hota et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2021). In the resource-constrained environment, social entrepreneurs use bricolage to innovatively recombine local resources and skills to create new avenues for livelihood (Hota et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b; Qureshi et al., 2021b). This process is particularly relevant for marginalized communities that may lack access to technical skills and resources. By leveraging local knowledge and resources, social entrepreneurs can create innovative solutions that are tailored to the specific needs and context of the community (Escobedo et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021c, d, 2022b).

Social entrepreneurs also engage in "inclusion work" (Hota et al., 2023) to navigate and, in some cases, address discrimination, marginalization, and intersectionality (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Bhatt et al., 2022; Ghatak et al., this volume; Pillai et al., 2021a; Qureshi et al., 2023). Engaging with marginalized communities through "inclusion work" helps social entrepreneurs co-create more inclusive and equitable societies. Another area where social entrepreneurship can significantly impact is the sharing economy. Social entrepreneurs can structure various innovative sharing economy models at the base of the pyramid to help communities engage in communal sharing (Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c). This can include sharing idle resources, such as agricultural or artisanal tools and equipment (Escobedo et al., 2021; Qiu et al., 2021) or creating knowledge commons (Qureshi et al. 2022b). Sharing also encourages responsible production and consumption, through which social entrepreneurship can contribute to sustainability. Social entrepreneurs can encourage responsible production and consumption by promoting responsible innovations, sustainable production practices, reducing waste, and promoting sustainable consumption patterns (Bacq & Aguilera, 2022; Javeri et al., this volume; Parth et al., 2021). Many social entrepreneurs use an ecosystem approach to structure innovative collaborations and partnerships to address grand challenges that cannot be mitigated by a single organization (Bhatt et al., 2021; Jha et al., 2016; Qureshi et al., 2021a; Thompson et al., 2018). By leveraging the strengths and resources of different organizations, social entrepreneurs can create more impactful and sustainable solutions.

Some social entrepreneurs also leverage digital technologies to design digital social innovation and increase the breadth and depth of their social impact (Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021d). Social entrepreneurs can use digital technologies to address social issues such as healthcare, education, and financial inclusion (Hatakka et al., 2020; Holeman & Barrett, 2017; Hota et al., 2021; Parth et al., 2021; Ravishankar, 2021). By leveraging digital technologies, social entrepreneurs can increase their reach, improve service delivery, and reduce costs. Most of the successful digital social entrepreneurs (Qureshi et al., 2021d) engage in *technoficing* by implementing good enough technologies that address social issues effectively rather than going after cutting-edge technologies that may not work in the rural context and are difficult to maintain (Qureshi et al., this volume; Qureshi et al., 2021a, d, 2022b).

Therefore, social entrepreneurship provides a promising direction for changing the trajectory of development. Social entrepreneurs are driven by the goal of addressing pressing social and environmental issues, and they use innovative business models to create social value. By leveraging local resources and knowledge, digital technologies, and innovative partnerships, social entrepreneurs can create more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable societies. However, it is important to understand the philosophical and motivational underpinnings of social entrepreneurship, lest it be co-opted by neoliberal models of competition, rent-seeking, and profit maximization.

1.2 Gandhian Thoughts at the Core of Social Entrepreneurship

Many social entrepreneurs in India and some around the world have been inspired by Gandhian philosophy and thoughts (Bhatt et al., 2013; Ghatak et al., this volume; Javeri et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Qureshi et al., this volume; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Mollner, 1984), which provide foundations for addressing social issues and creating social impact. These important Gandhian tenets include Constructive Work, Trusteeship, Sarvodaya, Swaraj, Antyodaya, village-centric development, and communities of care. Constructive work, according to Gandhi, is a way to build self-reliant and resilient communities by engaging them in creative activities that lead to personal and social transformation, challenge unjust systems and structures, and prefigure a more sustainable and equitable future (Bhatt et al., 2013, 2022, 2013; Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume). Social entrepreneurs who are inspired by this tenet engage in activities to improve the lives of individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Constructive work can be done in various fields, such as education, healthcare, agriculture, sanitation, and others. Trusteeship is another Gandhian tenet that social entrepreneurs often embrace. Gandhi (1942, 1960) believed that wealth, power, and resources were held in trust by their possessors, who had a moral responsibility to use them for the benefit of society (see Chakrabarty, 2015; Hingorani, 1970). This idea that individual ownership is not absolute but rather a social responsibility is an essential concept for social entrepreneurs to use resources and skills for the benefit of society and use them to help those in need (Balakrishnan et al., 2017; Bhatt et al., 2013; Datta & Gailey, 2012; Gopinath, 2005; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume).

Similarly, social entrepreneurs are inspired by the concept of Sarvodaya, which refers to creating a *utopian* society where there is equal distribution of wealth and opportunities and where each individual has access to the basic necessities of life (Bhatt et al., 2013, 2023; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Kumar et al., this volume). This concept is closely linked to the idea of *Swaraj*, which means self-rule or self-governance. According to Gandhi, *Swaraj* can only be achieved when every individual is self-reliant and has control over their own life (Bhatt et al., 2013; Datta &

Gailey, 2012; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Mukherjee, 2009). This means that every individual should have access to basic necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter and be able to participate in the decision-making process affecting their lives. Sarvodaya, Gandhi argues, can be achieved through *Antyodaya*, which is a Gandhian term for the upliftment of the most marginalized members of society. Thus, *Antyodaya* represents a *concrete utopia*[1] (Bloch, 1986; Holloway, 2010; Monticelli, 2018) and a way to *prefigure*[2] (Dinerstein, 2015; Pellizzoni, 2021) a more equitable society (Javeri et al., this volume). Social entrepreneurs who embrace this tenet recognize that a society's progress should be measured by the well-being of its most marginalized members. They work towards creating initiatives that provide marginalized communities with access to basic necessities and resources to improve their lives (Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023; Javeri et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Sutter et al., 2023).

Gandhi's vision of village-centric development rests on the concept of *Antyodaya*, as most marginalized people live in rural areas that lack the most basic amenities. According to Gandhi, the villages should be self-sufficient and have everything necessary for a simple and contented life (Gandhi, 1947; Iyer, 1986; Kumarappa, 1958; Mehta & Jacob, this volume). He envisioned a decentralized, people-centric, and self-sufficient economic model, with the villages as the focal point for economic development (Gandhi, 1947). Social entrepreneurs inspired by this tenet work towards creating initiatives supporting local economies and communities (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Bhatt et al., this volume). Finally, communities of care[3] is an idea that is inspired by Gandhian thoughts about interconnected and supportive communities (Mehta & Jacob, this volume), which

[1] Concrete utopia is a vision of an ideal society that is both imaginative and achievable. It combines the idea of a utopia, which is often seen as an unattainable ideal, with a practical plan for achieving that society. Although Antyodaya is an idea desired state, it is achievable through various initiatives such as Concrete utopias can be expressed through various means, including art, literature, architecture, and political movements.

[2] Prefigurative organizing is process for bringing social and political change that seeks to embody the values and principles of the desired future society in the present. It is based on the idea that the means of achieving a goal are as important as the goal itself, and that the way we organize and act in the present should reflect the kind of society we want to create in the future (Calhoun, 2013; Maeckelbergh, 2011). According to Gandhi, the means-end equivalence principle is the idea that the methods or actions used to achieve a goal must be consistent with the goal itself, rather than simply using any means necessary to justify the end result. In other words, the process of achieving a goal is just as important as the goal itself, and the methods used must reflect the same values and principles as the desired outcome (Bhatt et al., 2023; Gandhi, 1932; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume).

[3] Communities of care is a process where local people come together to take responsibility for the local ecological and cultural commons, thereby organically leading to just, sustainable, and equitable development. These are place-based communities united by shared practices of attending to and caring for each other. Such communities of care are not necessarily seeking political influence or dominance but rather bringing together community members with or without external catalysts. In Gandhian philosophy of constructive works, such external members, who act as catalyst are called *Sahyogi Mitra* (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume).

emphasize mutual support and cooperation between individuals and communities and recognize the importance of caring for others as a fundamental aspect of human society. Social entrepreneurs who embrace this tenet recognize the importance of communities taking responsibility for their own development and relying on their own resources rather than depending on external institutions or governments.

This edited book provides several such examples that will shed light on the core principles of Gandhian philosophy, such as *Sarvodaya*, *Antyodaya*, *Self-sufficiency*, *Self-reliance*, *Village-centric development*, *Constructive work*, and *Trusteeship*, and their relevance in inspiring social entrepreneurship. Further, this book explores the implementation of these principles by some of the leading social purpose organizations to understand their implications for nurturing resilient communities in the post-COVID world.

2 Nurturing Resilient Communities: Gandhi-Inspired Social Entrepreneurial Processes

Resilient communities are characterized by their abilities to adapt and recover quickly from adverse situations such as natural disasters, socio-political disruptions, and economic and environmental shocks (Barr & Devine-Wright, 2012; Robinson & Carson, 2016). The key attributes of resilient communities include adaptability, inclusivity, diversity, social cohesion, and shared values and collaboration (Bhatt, 2017, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2022; Pillai et al., 2021a). Extant research suggests several action-oriented approaches to building resilient communities, which include building capacity through social intermediation, managing natural resources as commons, and developing economic, social, and environmental capital (Adger, 2006; Bhatt et al., 2019, 2022; Kistruck et al., 2013a; Pillai et al., 2021a; Qureshi et al., 2022b; Robinson & Carson, 2016).

In this regard, the Gandhian perspective highlights the important roles of self-sufficiency and freedom, self-reliance and utilization of local resources, nonviolence, and decentralized and participatory decision-making in nurturing resilient communities (Dasgupta, 1996; Ganguli, 1977; Kumarappa, 1951). In the Gandhian view, self-sufficiency and freedom are closely related, as communities that lack self-sufficiency in their primary needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter, may not attain freedom (Kumarappa, 1951). The external dependence on their basic necessities makes them vulnerable to exploitation and violence (Dasgupta, 1996; Ganguli, 1977). Gandhi viewed self-reliance as the primary mechanism to empower communities and help them achieve sustainable development (Dasgupta, 1996; Ganguli, 1977). The principle of self-reliance is based on the identification and leveraging of interdependencies in the local community and the efficient utilization of locally available resources (Dasgupta, 1996; Kumarappa, 1951). Self-reliance also calls for the appreciation of moral responsibilities by individuals and the development of governance mechanisms at the local level, often referred to as self-governance

(Govindu and Malghan 2016; Koulagi, 2022). This self-governance, based on the principles of decentralized and participatory decision-making, was central to the Gandhian view of self-reliance (Gupta, 2009; Khoshoo, 2002).

However, Gandhi knew that a stable society, based on justice and equity, cannot be built without helping and empowering the most marginalized in society. He referred to the upliftment of the last person (i.e., the most marginalized) as Antyodaya. As per his Antyodaya philosophy, a society's ultimate goal should be the welfare and empowerment of its weakest and poorest sections (Khoshoo, 2002). He called for civil societies and corporations to collaborate toward the empowerment of the marginalized population. Gandhi propounded the *trusteeship* perspective and advocated that businesses and wealthy individuals should take the moral and ethical responsibility of creating a peaceful, just, and equitable society (Ghosh, 1989; Joseph et al., 2016). Gandhi considered the principle of Trusteeship as an alternative to communism and capitalism (Dasgupta, 1996). He suggested that wealthy individuals and corporations should behave as trustees of their resources and utilize their resources voluntarily for the welfare and shared prosperity of society. He believed that this trusteeship approach offers a non-violent means of creating a just, peaceful, and equitable society (Dasgupta, 1996; Joseph et al., 2016). Gandhi always advocated "nonviolence" as the primary means to achieve the end goals such as self-sufficiency or sustainability (Kumarappa, 1951). His idea of nonviolence encapsulated not only human interactions but also the interactions between humans and nature (Weber, 1999). He emphasized that excessive exploitation of natural resources is an act of violence and warned that it will harm the sustainability of this planet (Bawa, 1996).

Several social organizations, covered in the second part of this book, strive to implement Gandhian principles to nurture resilient communities. For example, Mahajan and Qureshi (2023), in this book, describe how a decade of experience in the development sector convinced the founder to focus on the most marginalized social groups, aligned with the Gandhian philosophy of *Antyodaya*, and how the founders of Basix, a new generation livelihood promotion institution, incorporated the elements of *Trusteeship* in their management and functioning. Similarly, Mehta and Jacob (this volume, Seva Mandir Part II, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir") demonstrate the process of creating a community of care while adhering to the principle of Trusteeship. Seva Mandir represents a model for the broader adoption of trusteeship ideas across the community to enrich the extant understanding of nurturing resilient communities. For example, their approach to revitalizing commons and the formation of collectives and managing them sustainably increases grassroots democracy in villages marred by caste and class divisions. It is also aligned very well with the Gandhian principles of *Antyodaya* and decentralized and participatory decision-making. In a similar vein, Drishtee is in the process of building resilient and sustainable communities by following the Gandhian ideas of self-reliance and self-sufficiency in its "Swavlamban" project (Mishra & Shukla, this volume, Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development"). Taking an ecosystem-based approach of scaling (Qureshi et al., 2021d), the organization starts by identifying and leveraging

interdependencies among the local rural communities. It is also introducing a structured barter system using a technological platform that has the potential to boost the rural economy as well as enhance social cohesion in the community. Drishtee is also implementing "*Nai Talim*" (Patil & Sinha, this volume, Part 1, chapter "School Education for Today: Extending Tagore and Gandhi's Idea of a Good Society (*Swaraj*) and Its Accompanying New Education (*Nai Talim*)") for skill building and for enhancing the productive capacities of the rural population to bring shared prosperity.

In sum, we observe that, although working in different geographies and functional domains, most of these social organizations are striving to implement the Gandhian value principles, which are mutually reinforcing. These social organizations also have some commonalities in their action-oriented approach to the implementation of Gandhian principles.

3 Sarvodaya Framework for Nurturing Resilient Communities

Drawing on the extant research and contributions made in the book, we have developed a Sarvodaya framework, a dynamic, iterative process model to explain how social organizations nurture resilient communities using the Gandhian approach. Figure 1 presents this process model. Below, we describe the several stages of this iterative process model.

3.1 Identifying Mutually Beneficial Interdependency

The first stage in the process involves identifying mutually beneficial interdependencies among the community members. Economic, ecological, and social interdependence can act as a glue that binds community members together (Barnaud et al., 2018; Bhatt et al., 2022; Presas, 2001). It can enable the norms of cooperation, trust, and reciprocity among the community members, leading to social cohesion (Bhatt 2017; Bhatt et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021b). The idea of mutually beneficial interdependencies is central to the Gandhian view of self-reliant communities, where the involvement in productive activities and economic exchange is motivated by the needs of the local community members and the availability of local resources (Dasgupta, 1996 Kumarappa, 1951).

Social organizations inspired by Gandhian principles understand the importance of mutually beneficial interdependencies in nurturing resilient communities and invest time and resources for this purpose. For example, PRADAN (Ghosh, this volume, Part II, chapter "PRADAN: Institution Building for Sustainable Development"), which initially started with an aim to provide technical and

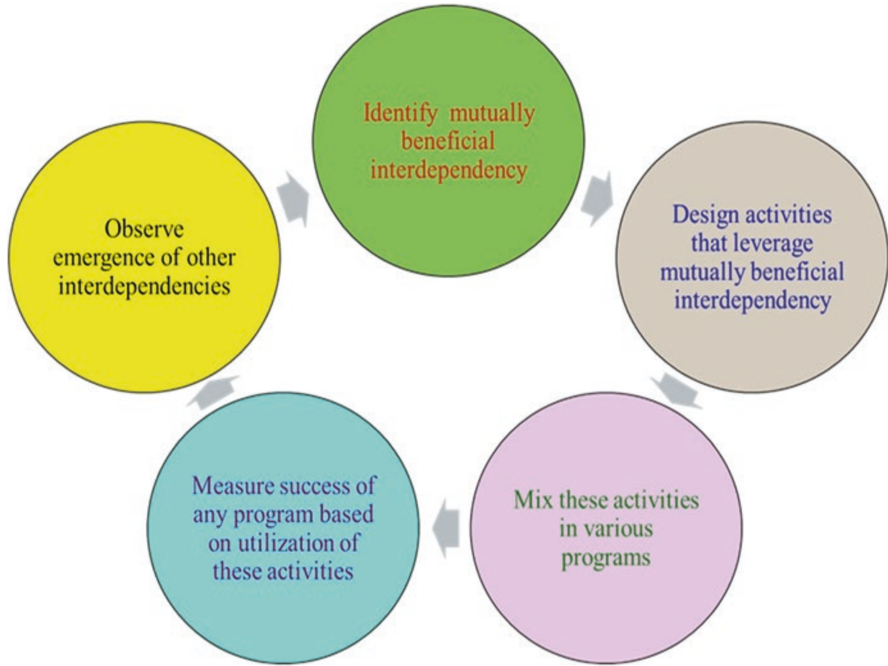

Fig. 1 Sarvodaya framework for nurturing resilient communities

management assistance to NGOs, over time realized the need to bring direct actions into the communities, leveraging their technical and managerial competencies. Their prolonged engagement in the communities enables them to identify the existing interdependence within and between the local communities. PRADAN leadership understood how intermediation can help leverage these interdependencies for the creation of livelihood opportunities. Their experimentations in Kesla (Madhya Pradesh), Barabanki (Uttar Pradesh), and Godda (Bihar) for poultry, leather, and tasar silk, respectively, show how these mutual interdependencies are identified and nurtured. Similarly, Drishtee, which ventured into rural areas as an internet-based service provider of E-government services, over the years, has also recognized the importance of mutually beneficial interdependencies among the rural areas in terms of their economic and social needs (Mishra & Shukla, this volume, Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development"). This understanding helped them initiate the "Swavlamban" project with an aim to develop self-reliance among the community members. They further introduced a structured barter system to facilitate economic and social exchange. Thus, identification of the mutually beneficial interdependence is a crucial first stage for nurturing resilient communities.

3.2 Design Activities That Leverage Mutually Beneficial Interdependency

The second stage in our process model describes the role of the intermediaries (social organizations) in designing activities to leverage the mutually beneficial interdependencies among the community members. This stage requires a very deep understanding of the rural communities, including their culture and history, social hierarchy, nature of local resources, shared values, and common vulnerabilities. For example, Seva Mandir intensified its efforts to develop constructive programs as it realized how the existing institutions embedded in the social and political hierarchy lacked the potential to utilize the existing interdependencies among the *adivasi* (indigenous) communities (Mehta & Jacob, this volume; Part II, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir"). Constructive programs were considered instrumental by Seva Mandir in leveraging social interdependence among the community members and improving collaboration between the rural *adivasi* (indigenous) people towards the comprehensive development of their communities. To aid its constructive programs, Seva Mandir designed activities such as creating awareness about participation in democratic processes, improving literacy among adults, imparting basic education, providing training to traditional birth attendants, creating awareness about public health, engaging people in projects, creating and supporting self-help groups, and developing village-level committees to improve decentralized and participatory decision making. These activities were designed with the ultimate aim to achieve "Gram Swaraj," a Gandhian idea that envisions agency and responsibility being located in the individuals and local communities (Govindu & Malghan 2016). Similarly, Drishtee has been striving to leverage the economic and social interdependence among the community members by designing several activities such as structured barter using a digital platform, vocational training based on the local needs and locally available resources (Mishra & Shukla, this volume, Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development"). These activities have the ultimate aim of making the local communities become self-reliant and resilient.

3.3 Mix (or Implement) These Activities in Various Programs

The third stage in the process involves implementing or mixing the designed activities that leverage the mutually beneficial interdependencies in various programs executed by the social organization. This stage is crucial for creating and scaling social impact. This implementation stage requires the involvement of and support from all levels of the social organization and involves deep interaction between the social organization and the community members. As a result, the complexity is very high in this stage of the process. The social organization implementing the designed activities requires a strong material and emotional commitment toward its goals, as

it may face severe resistance from the community members. Moreover, since implementation needs involvement from all levels of the organization, strong coordination and clear communication between the leadership and field staff are important.

We observe that social organizations often take an experimentation and learning-based approach to mix the designed activities across several programs. For example, PRADAN first experimented with livelihood opportunity generation activities at a small scale in Kesla (Madhya Pradesh), Barabanki (Uttar Pradesh), and Godda (Bihar) for poultry, leather, and tasar, respectively, and learned about community members' engagement, logistics, and response from the market before scaling up and creating producers' collectives (Ghosh, this volume, Part II, chapter "PRADAN: Institution Building for Sustainable Development"). Similarly, Seva Mandir's approach was evolutionary and initially involved community activities such as adult literacy, primary education, water conservation and watershed, and public health programs in a few *adivasi* (indigenous) villages before implementing activities for comprehensive development programs for the villages (Mehta & Jacob, this volume; Part II, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir"). Further, we observed that Drishtee also started with pilot programs in Bihar and Assam for their Swavlamban project and in Uttar Pradesh for the structured barter activities before implementing across multiple states (Mishra & Shukla, this volume, Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development"). Thus, given the complexity involved in the implementation, social organizations take a gradual and proactive long-term orientation while implementing their programs.

3.4 Measure the Success of a Program Based on the Utilization of These Activities

The fourth stage of the process involves measuring the success of any program based on the utilization of the activities designed and implemented to leverage mutually beneficial interdependencies among the community members. The traditional measures to understand the scale and scope of social impact, such as progress in alleviating societal problems, individuals and geographies covered, capacities developed, or social return on investment (Bacq & Eddleston, 2018; Bloom & Smith, 2010; Ebrahim & Rangan, 2014; Phillips & Johnson, 2021), may not provide a complete and accurate view of whether the designed and implemented activities are effective or not. Social organizations must develop performance evaluation criteria based on the extent of utilization and effectiveness of the activities designed and implemented for leveraging mutually beneficial interdependencies. For example, a social organization may have an inflated sense of impact by measuring its scale and scope in terms of the number of beneficiaries or geographies targeted, but these measures may not be effective in developing an understanding of the economic, ecological, and social interdependencies leveraged by the organization.

Thus, these organizations may require to develop the criteria based on the utilization of designed activities such as trust and cooperation between the members, social cohesion, or the extent of economic and social exchanges between the community members.

We observe that several organizations, covered in this book, have developed measures of success based on the utilization of activities that were designed to leverage interdependence between the community members. For example, SEWA aims to empower marginalized women by making them self-reliant (Ghatak et al., this volume; Part II, chapter "Cultivating Women Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of SEWA"). Drawing on the Gandhian principles of *Antyodaya*, Trusteeship, and Self-reliance, SEWA has designed several programs such as awareness development, capacity building, business development support, and lifestyle improvement to empower marginalized women. The commonality across all the programs is their reliance on a cooperative structure. It has created over 50 cooperatives that work on the principles of social and economic interdependence (Lomi, 1995). Thus, the development of trust and cooperation among the members and collective well-being act as the foundation of all the activities of SEWA and feature prominently in their measure of success. Similarly, Drishtee, which takes an ecosystem-based approach to enable self-reliance (Swavlamban), has developed criteria that rely on activities designed to leverage interdependence (Mishra & Shukla, this volume, Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development"). For example, Drishtee measures the success of their Swavlamban program using criteria such as the extent of barter exchanges among the local communities, trust and cooperation, and reliance on locally available resources. All these criteria fit very well with the activities designed by Drishtee to enable community self-reliance, such as digital platform-based bartering and vocational training based on locally available resources.

3.5 *Observe the Emergence of Other Interdependencies*

The last stage of this Sarvodaya process model involves observing the emergence of other interdependencies in the community that may not be present or salient at the beginning of the intervention by the social organizations. For example, activities designed to leverage economic or social interdependencies may lead to the emergence of ecological interdependencies and vice versa (Barnaud et al., 2018). Thus, social intermediaries need to constantly look for emerging interdependencies and assess their implications for the earlier identified mutually beneficial interdependencies. As the emergence of new interdependencies requires reanalyzing and identifying the mutually beneficial interdependencies among the community members, this stage feeds into the first stage of the iterative process model mentioned in Fig. 1.

Most of the social organizations, covered in this book, engage in observing the emergence of new interdependencies and accordingly modify or transform their

existing activities over time. For example, SELCO exemplifies how to first identify the economic and ecological interdependencies of the community members and develop programs to cater to the energy needs of the most marginalized in the community by making modern solar technology affordable and accessible for their use. Further, over time, it observed the emergence of social interdependencies where the use of affordable solar products by community members created livelihood opportunities for other marginalized women (Javeri et al., this volume, Part II, chapter "Balancing Equity, Ecology, and Economy Through Antyodaya Leadership: A Case Study of SELCO"). SELCO trained several rural women in the installation and servicing of solar products and transformed them into women entrepreneurs. Similarly, Drishtee initially developed the *Swavlamban* project to leverage the economic interdependencies among the rural communities by providing women with training, helping them set up microenterprise groups, and marketing their products locally (Mishra & Shukla, this volume, Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development"). Thus, it promoted local production and consumption. However, over time, the organization observed that rural women were motivated more by savings rather than spending and participated in voluntary non-monetary exchanges between the rural neighbors to meet their daily needs. This observation helped Drishtee in identifying an emergent interdependency among the community members, which emerged from the economic and social needs of the rural communities. To leverage this emergent interdependency, Drishtee introduced a structured digital platform-based barter system. In a similar vein, SEWA (Ghatak et al., this volume, Part II, chapter "Cultivating Women Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of SEWA") observes the emerging interdependencies among marginalized women to form new functional and business entities under its umbrella organization.

In sum, the Sarvodaya framework, a dynamic process model presented above, can help social organizations nurture resilient communities by identifying interdependencies among the community members and leveraging them through the design and implementation of appropriate activities. This process model calls for measuring success based on the utilization of the designed activities. Further, it suggests social organizations constantly look for emerging interdependencies that may require changes in their earlier-designed interdependencies. Below, we provide a summary of contributions made in this book by outlining their implications for the Gandhian approach to nurturing resilient communities.

4 Summary of Contributions

Figure 2 presents an overview of the themes covered in various chapters of this book. The core principles presented in the figure form the foundations of all the chapters in this book. The chapters in the first part explain how these core principles manifest in various socioeconomic and educational programs recommended by Gandhi. Chapters in Part II then build on these core principles and their manifested

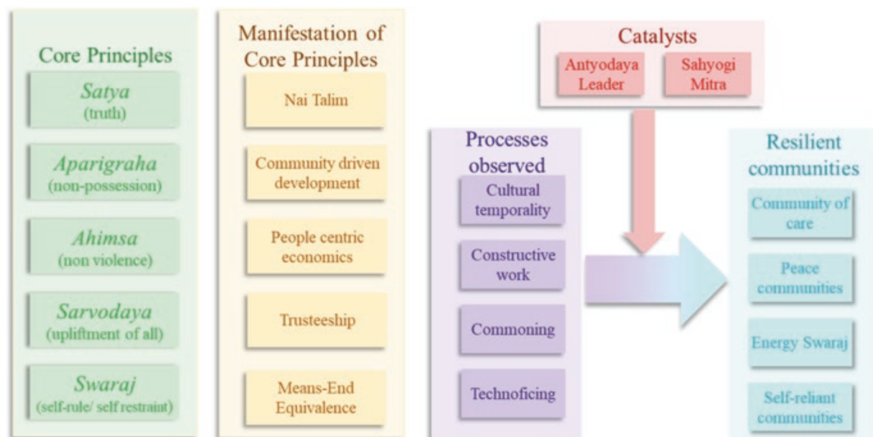

Fig. 2 Gandhian principles and resilient communities

programs to identify various processes and the role of catalysts in nurturing resilient communities.

In particular, highlighting the relevance of core Gandhian principles in contemporary times, Iyengar and Bhatt (Part I, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability") in their treatise suggest how Gandhian Trusteeship is a manifestation of the principles of *Aparigraha* (*non-possession*), *Ahimsa* (*nonviolence*), *Sarvodaya* (*upliftment of all*), and *Swaraj* (see Fig. 2). Authors suggest that *Trusteeship* acts as a moral, ethical, and material instrument to empower the most marginalized sections of a community and can be leveraged to balance the ever-growing material and ecological concerns in the process of *commoning*. In a similar vein, Bhatt and Qureshi (Part I, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work") explain how core Gandhian principles, such as *Sarvodaya* and *Swaraj*, provide foundations to design the community-driven development (CDD) model. Discussing the increasing prominence of the CDD in management research, the authors show how its formulation of solutions and efforts to implement them can overlook the asymmetrical power relations prevalent in the community. The authors explore the potential of *Constructive Work* as a process to navigate the power relations in the community and suggest future avenues to expand constructive work through the concept of cultural temporality.

Next, Moolakattu (Part I, chapter "Gandhian Approach to Development: Implications for the Post-COVID World") draws on the Gandhian principles of non-possession, nonviolence, and self-governance to illustrate how community-driven development and people-centric economics can lead to village self-reliance. The author further explains the relevance of *Nai Talim* and *Trusteeship*, other manifestations of Core Gandhian principles, in driving villages towards self-reliance and resilience. Relying on J. C. Kumarappa, the Gandhian economist, to substantiate key arguments, the author shows how the quality of life can improve even when the

standard of living decreases in material terms. Finally, Patil and Sinha's work on *Nai Talim* or New Education (Part I, chapter "School Education for Today: Extending Tagore and Gandhi's Idea of a Good Society (*Swaraj*) and Its Accompanying New Education (*Nai Talim*)") is the final chapter in this part. The authors elucidate how *Nai Talim*, advanced as an alternative education program founded on the core Gandhian principles of *Satya*, *Ahimsa*, *Sarvodaya*, and *Swaraj*, is critical in nurturing resilient communities. They demonstrate how the new educational model suggested by Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore has the potential to provide a new framework based on Productive Work. The authors here provide an expanded interpretation of Gandhian *Constructive Work*, moving away from vocational capacity building to include aspects such as food and energy self-reliance along with grassroots democracy, ecological conservation, and health, which are considered critical in achieving self-sufficiency in a community.

Part II provides a collection of cases that provide empirical examples of how the Gandhian core principles and their manifestations are practiced on the ground. Chapters in this part provide evidence of processes and catalysts that help nurture resilient communities. This part opens with one of the oldest such organizations, the Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA) (Part II, chapter "Sarvodaya to Nurture Peace Communities: A Case Study of ASSEFA"), and its evolution over the last five decades since its inception. Initiated with the objective of making the lands under the *Bhoodan* (Land Gift) Movement habitable, the authors Kumar, Pillai, and Qureshi provide insights on how ASSEFA was able to leverage a need-based approach to build village-level institutions. ASSEFA draws on the core Gandhian principles of *Aparigraha*, *Ahimsa*, *Sarvodaya*, and *Swaraj* to advance a community-driven development model. The community-level trusteeship enabled by ASSEFA is central to building resilient communities. The chapter also shows how ASSEFA engages in the processes of cultural temporality, commoning, and constructive work in prefiguring a just social order.

Next, Ghosh presents the case of PRADAN (Part II, chapter "PRADAN: Institution Building for Sustainable Development"), a social intermediary that relies on technology and professional assistance to find solutions to complex rural problems. It provides an in-depth understanding of the women-run SHGs, which form the fulcrum of PRADAN's work in rural areas, and highlights how professional intermediation can help raise family incomes and also empower women in the process, leading to the *self-reliance* of the community. Like ASSEFA, PRADAN draws on Gandhian core principles of *Sarvodaya* and *Swaraj* and implements these ideas to advance a model of community-driven development, which relies on people-centric economics rather than individual wealth maximization economics, and *Nai Talim*. PRADAN also uses Constructive Work as the key process for building resilient communities. The story of the Basix Social Enterprise Group (Part II, chapter "Basix Social Enterprise Group: Inclusive Development") and its drive for inclusive development form the basis of the next chapter. Co-authored by the founder himself, Mahajan and Qureshi trace the emergence of Basix as a pioneering financial services intermediary leveraging microcredit. Narrated as a series of the founder's "encounters with truth" in Gandhian parlance, it sheds light on the implications of

having a robust microfinance network in the rural area to boost livelihood promotion for the most marginalized, the *Antyodaya*. The founder of Basix has also been inspired by the core Gandhian principles of *Truth*, *Nonviolence*, *Sarvodaya*, and *Swaraj* during the course of Basix's journey. This case exemplifies how *Trusteeship* is reflective of all the core Gandhian principles and guides social intermediation by Basix.

Next, advancing the idea of social intermediation, Qureshi, Pandey, Shukla, and Pillai (Part II, chapter "*Technoficing*: Reinterpretation of Gandhian Perspectives on Technology") present the case of Digital Green, a social organization engaged in digital intermediation efforts. Guided by Gandhian core principles, Digital Green works towards developing a community-driven development model. It leverages the processes of commoning and technoficing to develop self-reliant communities. In a similar vein, Mishra and Shukla (Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development") present the case of Drishtee, a social enterprise that is engaged in building *Swavlamban* (*self-reliant*) communities. The authors highlight Drishtee's efforts in developing a rural ecosystem that supports a community-driven development model. Constantly inspired by the Gandhian core principles of *Sarvodaya* and *Swaraj*, Drishtee has implemented *Nai Talim* and taken a *people-centric economic* approach. It also leverages *commoning* and *constructive work* to build self-reliant communities.

Another case in point is the story of Seva Mandir (Part II, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir"), a social organization based out of the Indian state of Rajasthan. Mehta and Jacob highlight the inspiration behind their initiatives, locating it in Gandhian core principles of Satya, Aparigraha, Ahimsa, Sarvodaya, and Swaraj, to develop self-reliant communities. Over the last 50 years, this organization has firmly practiced *means-end equivalence*, which has helped it develop strong village institutions supporting democratic practices at the grassroots level. Seva Mandir also follows the principle of *Trusteeship* within the organization. Seva Mandir's objective is to build *communities of care* in which members tend to each other and take responsibility for the ecological and cultural *commons*.

Next is the case of one of the largest women's self-employment collectives in the world, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) (Part II, chapter "Cultivating Women Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of SEWA"), established by the renowned Gandhian Ela Bhatt. Ghatak, Alam, and Qureshi, through their treatise on SEWA, suggest how the core Gandhian principles of *Sarvodaya* and *Swaraj* have guided the organization in empowering women through social mobilization using the cooperative model. Authors highlight that SEWA, following *people-centric economics,* has created economic and social interdependence among marginalized women by establishing over 50 cooperatives. Further, SEWA has also implemented *Nai Talim* to develop the capabilities of marginalized women. The case of SEWA highlights how economic and social interdependence can help build *self-reliant communities*. Next, Javeri, Harish, and Bhatt (Part II, chapter "Balancing Equity, Ecology, and Economy Through Antyodaya Leadership: A Case Study of SELCO") present the case of SELCO, which, drawing on the core Gandhian principles of *Sarvodaya* and *Swaraj*, has implemented decentralized renewable energy

solutions to empower the most marginalized (*Antyodaya*). They also highlight how SELCO, with its principle of keeping the most marginalized at the center of the decision-making and planning apparatus, exhibits the ideals of *Antyodaya Leadership* and nurtures resilient communities.

The last part of Part II offers two additional insightful chapters that are unique in many ways. Roy, a renowned social activist and Gandhian, through her work (Part II, chapter "Economics: Where People Matter"), narrates the relevance of the Gandhian ideals of *Nirman* (bottom-up participatory development) and *Sangharsh* (social mobilization and public action) through her own experience. Both of these ideals build on the core Gandhian principles of *Satya, Ahimsa, Sarvodaya*, and *Swaraj*. The chapter takes the examples of the Barefoot College at Tilonia, a social organization of repute, and its interventions among the craftspeople, spanning credit facilities to forward linkages, to shed light on how dignity should be the cornerstone of bottom-up community-driven developmental intervention. The evolution of another intermediary established by the author and its efforts to spearhead the campaign for the enactment of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in India, which assures livelihood security, is cited as an example of Gandhian public action. These actions, leveraging the processes of *Constructive work* and *Commoning*, have played a salient role in nurturing resilient communities. Finally, in a similar vein, Solanki (Part II, chapter "Extending Gandhian Philosophy to Mitigate Climate Change: The Idea of Energy Swaraj"), drawing on the core Gandhian principles of *Ahimsa* and *Swaraj*, calls for a collective effort to achieve *Energy Swaraj.* Drawing from the sustainability-paradox literature and invoking the principle of *Trusteeship*, the chapter argues that limiting consumption and localized production should be the twin principles based on which energy sustainability should be viewed and practiced.

In sum, this book is an initial attempt to advance the research on the exploration of alternatives based on Gandhian principles to build resilient communities. Based on the extant literature and the papers submitted in this book, we provide a Sarvodaya framework (summarized in Fig. 2) to show the core principles that inspire social entrepreneurship. These core Gandhian principles, *Satya*, *Aparigraha*, *Ahimsa*, *Sarvodaya*, and *Swaraj*, are manifested in various Gandhian approaches such as *Nai Talim*, *Community-driven development*, *People-centric economics*, *Trusteeship*, and *Means-End equivalence*. Further, the cases included in the second section reveal various processes leveraged by social organizations to build resilient communities. These processes include *Cultural temporality*, *Constructive work*, *Commoning*, and *Technoficing*. Additionally, *Antyodaya Leader* and *Sahyogi Mitra* are identified as two catalysts that enable the development of resilient communities. Finally, the cases included in this book suggest Community of care, Peace communities, Energy Swaraj, and Self-reliant communities as the four dimensions of resilient communities. Below, we present a summary of the cases in Part II with primary Gandhian tenets and a brief description in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of cases of social organization covered in this book

Authors	Cases	Core principle; process; catalyst	Brief description
Kumar et al. (this volume)	Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA)	Sarvodaya and Aparigraha (Trusteeship); Constructive Work; Antyodaya Leader (community women)	Self-reliance is built through pooling resources in village-level institutions for building sustainable livelihood options. Social issues are addressed through the formation of groups based on trade and economic interests rather than on social identity. It encourages Sarvodaya
Ghosh (this volume)	PRADAN	Ahimsa and Satya; Constructive Work; Sahyogi Mitra (professionals' assistance)	Novel model of seeding professionals into social organizations and community ownership of the projects and the use of technology and management principles to improve efficiency
Mahajan and Qureshi (this volume)	BASIX	Sarvodaya; Constructive Work; Antyodaya Leader (community members)	Multi-faceted, new-age intermediary engaged in the provision of financial services for livelihoods, agriculture, livestock, and enterprise development. Institutional development services for organizing farmers as producers
Qureshi et al. (this volume)	Digital Green	Sarvodaya; Technoficing; Antyodaya Leader (frontline workers)	The use of "good enough" technologies and a focus on social context for disseminating knowledge on agricultural efficiency and public health
Mishra and Shukla (this volume)	Drishtee	Satya & Swaraj; Constructive Work & Cultural Temporality; Antyodaya Leader (Drishtee Mitra)	Identifying interdependencies among the local communities and bringing intervention to leverage those interdependencies with an aim to create self-reliant communities; Empowering and skilling local actors to engage in entrepreneurship; a digital platform-based barter system devised at the local level to build local markets
Mehta and Jacob (this volume)	Seva Mandir	Sarvodaya & Swaraj; Commoning; Antyodaya Leader (community members) & Sahyogi Mitra (professionals)	Through adult literacy, agricultural extension, and commoning, the organization aims to build grassroots democracy and reduce external dependency on state-led welfare programs
Ghatak et al. (this volume)	Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)	Satya & Sarvodaya; Cultural temporality; Antyodaya Leader (community women)	Role of cognitive and emotional framing (interdependencies) to build women's social entrepreneurship; to enhance women's social and economic well-being; social transformation with the realization that the underlying triggers for marginalization are located beyond basic materialistic aspects

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Authors	Cases	Core principle; process; catalyst	Brief description
Javeri et al. (this volume)	SELCO Foundation	Aparigraha & Satya; Commoning; Antyodaya Leader (Community members)	Aims to alleviate poverty by designing and implementing programs for the benefit of the marginalized through decentralized renewable energy solutions
Roy (this volume)	Barefoot College and Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan	Swaraj & Ahimsa; Constructive work and cultural temporality; Antyodaya Leader (public action)	The chapter suggests bottom-up participatory planning by giving examples of the crafts-related market building along with public action for rights-based issues such as that of state-led employment guarantee programs
Solanki (this volume)	Energy Swaraj	Ahimsa & Swaraj; Commoning; Antyodaya Leader (Public action)	Advocates limiting exploitative consumption and aims to improve reliance on localized solar power production models, which can be democratized to replace the carbon-based economic framework

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Part I
Gandhian Perspectives: Core Ideas

Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability

Sudarshan Iyengar and Babita Bhatt

1 Introduction

Addressing the grand challenges of poverty, inequality, and climate change are the key objectives of global policy on sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Qureshi et al., 2018b, 2021d, 2023). The SDGs show a commitment towards inclusive development and identify equity, inclusion, and environmental governance as three areas of critical importance (Bansal et al., 2014; Bhatt, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2013, 2022; Ghatak et al., this volume; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume). Businesses are expected to be key stakeholders in implementing and achieving the SDGs through contributing resources, technological innovation, and sharing knowledge and expertise (Rashed & Shah, 2021; Scheyvens et al., 2016). Concurrently, SDGs also provide a guideline for businesses to shape, manage, and communicate their corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies (Berrone et al., 2023; McKinsey, 2019). However, the role of businesses in achieving the SDGs has been increasingly scrutinized (De Bakker et al., 2020; Qureshi et al., 2021a; Wickert, 2021). Particularly in the light of repeated scandals, mistreatments of workers, environmental exploitation, and massive tax evasion, is it even possible to achieve the SDGs without the transformation of businesses and the economic system within which they operate?

In management research, the role and responsibility of businesses in addressing grand challenges have been studied within the domain of CSR. The term CSR suggests that businesses have a responsibility towards improving socio-ecological

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conditions and creating welfare for the broader society (Bansal et al., 2014; Medina-Muñoz & Medina-Muñoz, 2020; Wang et al., 2022). However, in practice, the nature and scope of CSR are predominantly framed through a business-centric approach, which considers it as a strategic tool to increase a firm's reputation, competitive position, and financial performance (Wickert, 2021). In this approach, CSR is described as a voluntary, strategic response to save capitalism by avoiding state interference and preventing regulation from the free market (De Bakker et al., 2020). Critics argue that the close connection between CSR and capitalism inherently limits its potential to address the challenges of poverty, inequality, and climate change, as these are essentially the result of a capitalist economic system (De Bakker et al., 2020; Schneider, 2020; Wickert, 2021; cf. Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013a, b; Qureshi et al., 2022b). Relatedly, De Bakker et al. (2020) discuss how

> the dominant neoliberal capitalist system poses important constraints on corporate actions that make negative social, environmental, and ethical externalities of business conduct unavoidable, or might even systematically encourage them. (p. 1296)

The frailty and underlying inequality of the current development system were severely exposed during the global pandemic, COVID-19 (Qureshi et al., 2020, 2022a). The efficiency-driven centralized production model based on the exploitation of cheap labor and consumption of fossil fuel for the supply and distribution network was severely disrupted during the lockdown (Shen & Sun, 2021). The impacts were deeply and broadly felt. For example, emerging research shows that the disruption of the global supply chain, the loss of employment, and the lack of social security have pushed over a billion people into extreme poverty (United Nations, 2020). It has threatened the livelihood of approximately two billion workers in the informal economy (ILO, 2020) and created acute food insecurity for the poor and marginalized groups (WFP, 2020). While the global economy shrank by approximately 3% in the first year of the pandemic and global poverty increased for the first time in a generation (World Bank, 2022), many businesses, driven by the capitalist principles of self-interest and opportunism, attempted profiteering and price gauging and engaged in financial speculation and paying bonuses to CEOs (Bapuji et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2021).

The profound impact of COVID on all walks of life provides an opportunity to rethink the development and its connections with the environment, business, and society. As noted above, questions are increasingly raised about the effectiveness of the industrial mode of production in advancing societal welfare (Banerjee et al., 2021; Bhatt, 2017, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2021, 2023; Hota et al., 2023; Peredo et al., 2022). There is also a growing realization that the business model based on incessant growth and profit maximization at the cost of depleting natural resources and increasing inequality is neither environmentally nor socially tenable (Bhatt et al., 2022; Klitgaard & Krall, 2012; Pandey et al., 2021; Perkins, 2018; Sutter et al., 2023). Thus, scholars in organization studies, management, and information systems are exploring new models of responsible businesses (Bansal et al., 2014; Parth et al., 2021), social enterprises (Hota et al., 2021; Kistruck et al., 2013a, b; Qiu

et al., 2021 Qureshi et al., 2016, this volume), social infomediaries (Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018a; Zainuddin et al., 2022), sharing economy at the base of the pyramid (Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qiu et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021b, c), and technoficing (Qureshi et al., 2021d, 2022b, 2023, this volume) to nurture the resilient communities (Bhatt et al., this volume-a) and find a way forward to cultivate self-reliant communities (Bhatt et al., this volume-b). However, most of these models are still rooted in the dominant economic paradigm under which most businesses and entrepreneurial initiatives function.

Given the intricate interdependence between the environment, business, and society has been widely acknowledged (Wiebers & Feigin, 2020), a comprehensive approach to development is essential. This chapter is a response to the recent call for the exploration of alternative models of development and the role and obligations of businesses in this context, with a particular focus on the Gandhian concept of Trusteeship. The chapter is structured in three sections. In the first section, we delve into the historical development of the idea of Trusteeship as a moral and political tool for promoting equality and fostering nation-building. We highlight the evolution of this concept, its historical and philosophical foundations, and its relevance in contemporary times. In the second section, we examine the key features of Trusteeship, highlighting its emphasis on the ethical and moral responsibilities of business leaders. We also discuss how Trusteeship seeks to establish a symbiotic relationship between the stakeholders of an organization, including shareholders, employees, customers, and the broader community. This section also examines how Trusteeship serves as a model for socially responsible business practices. Finally, in the third section, we explore the significance of Trusteeship in the contemporary world. We demonstrate how it provides an alternative perspective on development, emphasizing the importance of social responsibility and ethical leadership in achieving sustainable development. This section also highlights the potential of Trusteeship as a means of promoting social justice, reducing inequality, and fostering inclusive economic growth.

2 Role of Spirituality in Gandhian Thought

In this section, we highlight the importance of recognizing the spiritual element in Gandhi's persona and his leadership style, which can be categorized as *Antyodaya* leadership (Javeri et al., this volume) – a leadership driven by the upliftment of the most marginalized. Gandhi's economic thought emphasizes the importance of ethical and spiritual values as core values and advocates for trusteeship as an economic system that stands on nonviolence. Subsequent sections contrast Gandhi's concept of trusteeship with communism and suggest that incorporating his thought perspective into management education can lead to a non-violent and harmonious society. Overall, Gandhi's life and thoughts provide valuable insights for leadership and self-improvement, and his trusteeship concept encourages everyone to earn whatever they need to survive and share whatever surplus they have. It also encourages

entrepreneurs to consider laborers as co-partners of wealth and to attend to their needs before claiming profit or surplus.

2.1 Spirituality in Economics and Business in West

The crisis of spirituality in economics and business in the *West* is increasingly becoming evident. Protestant Ethics once upheld honesty, hard work, and material wealth as divine and believed that a harmonious and prosperous society would result from such values. However, as capitalism flourished, these values gave way to gluttony, pride, selfishness, and greed, leading to undesired results (Giddens, 2005). The focus on quantifying and measuring the welfare of human beings through indicators such as GDP and per capita income has further reinforced this materialistic approach. Despite this, there is a growing effort to re-establish the values of Protestant Ethics and bring spirituality into mainstream economics through initiatives such as the European **Sp**irituality in **E**conomics and **S**ociety (SPES) Forum (Bouckaert & Zsolnai, 2007). However, it is important to avoid treating spirituality as a market commodity within the reductionist framework of economics. Instead, it should be considered a public good that can serve the common good of nature, future generations, and society. Treating spirituality as a private good limits the external benefits that it can provide to society (Bouckaert & Zsolnai, 2007, 2011). Spirituality has characteristics of indivisibility and external effects, which can be both negative and positive (Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002). In the absence of addressing spiritual well-being and only considering material well-being leads to, at its best, a welfare state created by liberal democracy discourse that remains hollow from within. While the welfare state promotes material well-being, it fails to address issues such as depression, stress, suicide, violence, and breakdown of social values. The relational nature of happiness cannot be achieved through instrumental rationality, and humanity needs to move beyond profit maximization, greed, and consumerism to promote equal conditions for all people. The interconnectedness of spirituality makes it a public good and has the potential to overcome the problems created by rampant capitalism.

2.2 Why Business Ethics Alone Would Not Suffice?

The integration of business ethics as a core course in management schools since the 1980s indicates that economics and business have not ignored ethical considerations. However, this alone is not a complete solution, as ethics in business is often used as instrumental rationality to achieve external goals such as reputation, profitability, and less regulation. Intrinsic ethics, on the other hand, emphasizes individual behavior based on values such as love, trust, friendship, and reciprocity, leading to spirituality. Critics argue that a focus on spirituality in economics may lead to

excessive individual subjective feelings rather than social and institutional conditions. Moreover, Western ethical theories tend to emphasize abstract models to be applied by moral agents rather than motivation, which is the main problem for ethical behavior. Therefore, although ethics is important, it is not sufficient, as it requires motivation based on universal values such as love, compassion, and empathy for all sentient beings.

2.3 Spirituality and Ethics in Management: The Indian Context

Some business schools are trying to bring spirituality and ethics into their management education. It argues that India's ancient traditions, such as Vedanta and Shastras, provide a holistic approach to business and economics that emphasizes spirituality and ethics. However, we note that in modern times, corruption and unethical behavior have become commonplace in the business community, and this can be attributed to the compartmentalization of economic affairs and the artificial separation of *Dharma* and *Artha.* Despite this, the traditional Indian approach to business and economics remains relevant and can be incorporated through the education of spirituality and ethics into management practices.

2.4 Gandhi and Conceptual Foundations of Trusteeship

The management community has shown interest in Mahatma Gandhi, as he was a successful leader who managed a large body of "human resources" (masses) and led "an enterprise" (freedom movement) to a successful mission (of liberating India). However, to study Gandhi from a management education perspective, it is necessary to acknowledge the element of spirituality in his persona. Gandhi's quest for truth was primarily spiritual, and his pursuit of self-realization was the driving force behind his actions in the public and social arenas. His leadership can be categorized as *Antyodaya* leadership, where he created an enterprise of the utmost efficiency and rejected untruth, intolerance, and violence. Studying Gandhi as a person from a management education perspective requires accepting the spiritual element in his persona rather than simply evaluating his ethical behavior as a leader. Gandhi's transformation into a Mahatma began at an early age with his regard for service, which ultimately turned him into a servant-leader of humanity.

Gandhi advocated for truth, honesty, nonviolence, and self-regulation. The young Gandhi learned the value of self-improvement through acknowledgment, repentance, and accepting punishment for wrongdoing, and he practiced self-discipline throughout his life. Gandhi fought for India's independence using nonviolent protest and believed that self-discipline (Swaraj) was essential for serving society and

its causes and forming a healthy and harmonious society. Gandhi's economic thought was deeply influenced by what he saw in England and the impact of British policies on natives and immigrants in South Africa and India. He advocated for building a spiritual nation and living according to high moral values rather than material wealth. His economic thought was based on renunciation, moral values, and self-reliance. Overall, Gandhi's life and thoughts provide valuable insights for leadership and self-improvement.

In his economic thought, Gandhi emphasizes the importance of ethics and spirituality and draws from this holistic approach to examine human behavior. As we describe below, he advocates for trusteeship as an economic system that stands in opposition to capitalism and communism. The basic argument is that for a sustainable society, trusteeship stands a better chance at the theoretical level, with the assumption that the trustee is honest and truthful. Despite criticism that trusteeship is not operational, Gandhi's idea is based on the value of *Aparigraha*, the non-acquisitive nature of the human being that has to be developed. Gandhi departs from conventional economists by emphasizing the multi-utility concept of *Aparigraha*, which takes into consideration the satisfaction of family members, relatives, the neighborhood, society at large, and the whole world by one's actions rather than focusing only on individual economic utility. If this normative nature of *Aparigraha* is accepted in mainstream economic analysis, cultivating an *Aparigrahi* individual becomes a major task.

Contrasting Gandhi's concept of trusteeship and communism, we elaborate on how Trusteeship is based on the principles of Ahimsa (nonviolence) and *Satyagraha* (non-violent resistance) and promotes the voluntary sharing of wealth by the wealthy and capitalists with the less fortunate. Gandhi believed that wealth creation and distribution based on violence were unethical. He viewed trusteeship as a system of possessing and creating wealth that is not against the principles of possession and creation. The state's role in the process is temporary and focused on inculcating personal moral values in society. Gandhi's trusteeship concept encourages entrepreneurs to consider laborers as co-partners of wealth and to attend to their needs before claiming profit or surplus.

3 Trusteeship: A Resource-Centric Account[1]

Gandhi's theory of Trusteeship is a social and economic philosophy that aims to create an equitable distribution of wealth and consumption of resources based on nonviolence and nonpossession (Dasgupta, 1996). It outlines the reciprocal

[1] We would like to acknowledge that Trusteeship has much broader implications and can be seen in various realms of societal relationships. Given the context of this book, we felt it would be most appropriate to look at the role of Trusteeship in the sustainable use of resources. We provide commoning as one example because the disciplines such as development studies, organization studies, and sociology are increasingly looking at commoning as a way to manage commons. It is impor-

obligations of business stakeholders to use all available resources for the common interest and welfare of society rather than for self-interest (Balakrishnan et al., 2017). The origins of Gandhi's theory are rooted in many ideas in both Western and Indian sources, including John Ruskin's "Unto This Last," the Bhagwat Gita, Jainism's *Aparigraha* (nonpossession), and *Ahimsa* (nonviolence) (Rao, 2021). Thus, Gandhi's views on Trusteeship were shaped by his reading of Western work (specifically Ruskin and Carnegie) and non-Western sources (such as the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads) (Chakrabarty, 2015). Chakrabarty (2015) suggests that Gandhi may have also been influenced by Andrew Carnegie's "The Gospel of Wealth" (1906).[2] This work offers an alternative to socialism within capitalism by urging the wealthy to adopt the principle of Trusteeship, which 'is held to be the duty of the man of wealth'. Carnegie viewed capital as a useful tool to combat poverty and recommended that the rich should spend their surplus wealth on serving the poor by providing various services, such as building education institutions and hospitals. These influences notwithstanding, scholars suggest that Gandhi's theory of Trusteeship was a unique Gandhian conceptualization, which served as both a moral philosophical device and an essential political tool for consolidating a multi-class alliance for nation-building in the twentieth century (Chakrabarty, 2015; Vidaković, 2022).

Gandhi was also deeply influenced by John Ruskin's essays "Unto This Last". He summarized the three teachings of this book in his biography:

I. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
II. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
III. That a life of labor, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living (Gandhi, 1983, p. 158).

Gandhi became eager to put these learnings from Ruskin's *Unto This Last* into practice and produced a Gujarati version and titled it *Sarvodya (upliftment of all)* (Vettickal, 1999, see also Kumar et al., this volume). As we discussed in later sections, *Sarvodya (upliftment of all)* is intrinsically connected to Trusteeship.

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tant to note, however, that commoning is not only about resources, it also incorporates cultural practices that reflect the values, traditions, and knowledge of a particular community, and shapes their relationship to the natural and built environment. In other words, it is a way of organizing social relations around shared resources, which seeks to foster community participation, democratic decision-making, and mutual benefit.

[2] Originally published in 1889.

3.1 Trusteeship: A Middle Path to Capitalism and Communism

Trusteeship aims to create an equitable society by eradicating the "unbridgeable gulf that exists between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'" (Gandhi 1928, 1932). Gandhi proposed his theory of Trusteeship as an alternative to capitalism and communism, as he found these two dominant economic systems morally unacceptable (Dasgupta, 1996; Waghmore, 2004). Gandhi rejected capitalism for its morally problematic view of human nature and private property. Capitalism is an economic system where individuals are allowed to accumulate wealth and control the use of their property to maximize their own self-interest. Further, in capitalism, "the invisible hand of the pricing mechanism coordinates supply and demand in markets in a way that is automatically in the best interests of society" (Scott, 2006, p. 1). These tenets of capitalism, i.e., the right to own private property, the pursuit of self-interest, and economic rationality, which benefit the entire society, date back to Adam Smith (1776) and are seen as the foundation of modern economics. Gandhi viewed these tenets of modern economics as deeply "disturbing" for deepening greed and aggressive materialistic competition and for compromising the moral, social, and environmental dimensions of human existence. He proposed Trusteeship to create a moral economy based on cooperation (over competition) and the common good and shared responsibilities (over self-interest) to overcome the negative consequence of capitalism (Vidaković, 2022).

Gandhi (1921) highlighted the importance of morality in economics by stating that:

> The economics that disregards moral and sentimental considerations are like wax works that being life-like still lack the life of the living flesh. At every crucial moment, these new-fangled economic laws have broken down in practice. And nations or individuals who accept them as guiding maxims must perish. (p. 344)

While Gandhi was appreciative of the communist and socialist ideals of social equality, he found the use of force (and violence) to achieve an equitable society morally unacceptable. Gandhi believed in the means-end equivalence, which describes a belief that instead of the *end* justifying the *means*, the *means* must be consistent with that of the *end* (Calhoun, 2013; Maeckelbergh, 2011). So, if the end goal is to achieve a peaceful, just society, then a means to achieve that cannot depend on violence (Gandhi, 1932). Further, Gandhi also found a greater threat to human dignity and self-respect in the political and economic power given to the state in communism (Waghmore 2004). Gandhi said:

> I look upon an increase of the power of the state with the greatest fear because, although, while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress. (Fischer, 1962, p. 304)

His doctrine of Trusteeship was based on non-violence and voluntary abdication of wealth to create a just and equitable society.

4 Trusteeship a Means to Achieve *Sarvodaya* (Upliftment of All)

Gandhi's theory of Trusteeship is deeply influenced by his spiritual, religious, and moral philosophy and is intrinsically connected to his principles of *Sarvodaya* (upliftment of all) through *Antyodaya* (upliftment of the most marginalized) (Javeri et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume), which are relevant today as they were during his time, as extreme poverty, discrimination, and marginalization continue to plague the world (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Bhatt et al., 2019; Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2019; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021, Qureshi et al., 2016, 2017, 2023; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017).

4.1 Sarvodaya *and Trusteeship*

Gandhi's Trusteeship is motivated by the belief that the purpose of development is to uplift all (i.e., Sarvodaya) through uplifting the most marginalized in society (i.e., Antyodaya) (Vettickal, 1999). It rejects the utilitarian maxim that the purpose of development is to "maximize the happiness of the maximum number of people" (Balganesh 2013). Utilitarianism assumes human nature as pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding and concludes that individuals should be free to follow their nature for utility maximization through exchanges in the market (Aydin 2011). Gandhi argues that in utilitarianism, happiness is conceptualized exclusively as material prosperity and physical happiness, and this has resulted in overconsumption and unlimited wants (Appadorai, 1969). Utilitarianism also does not distinguish between specific actions that bring about those outcomes or the morality of those actions (Balganesh, 2013). In this approach, the purpose is to maximize happiness, and "if the laws of morality are broken in the pursuit of happiness, it does not matter very much" (Gandhi, 1954, p. 7).

Furthermore, Gandhi also criticized utilitarianism for overlooking distributive questions and for sacrificing the interests of the minority for the benefit of the majority (Appadorai, 1969). He described it as an act of violence against the minority (Dasgupta, 1996). Instead of utilitarianism, Gandhi proposed *Sarvodaya* as a development maxim, which is based on the recognition that "the good of the individual is contained in the good of all" (Gandhi, 1983, p. 158).

Trusteeship connects *Sarvodaya* to a moral theory of action and is rooted in Gandhi's moral vision of an economy (Balganesh, 2013; Kumar et al., this volume). Through these concepts, Gandhi not only highlights the importance of individual actions but also prescribes how individual behavior and action should be channeled in society (Gandhi, 1954). For Gandhi, individual actions are morally right when they work for the betterment of society, as individual and social welfare is intricately connected to each other (Vettickal, 1999). Therefore, Gandhi believed that the goal of *Sarvodaya* will become reality when individuals would use their

resources (physical, financial, and skills) for the upliftment of others (Gopinath, 2005; Kumar et al., this volume).

Relatedly, Gandhi believed that Trusteeship could neither be implemented in a top-down or coercive manner (violent means) nor through market incentives; instead, it will be achieved through individuals' self-realization of their virtues (Dalton, 2012). He found the acceptance of a trusteeship a deeply personal act and highlighted the importance of social responsibilities, *Aparigraha*, and *Swaraj* in its achievement (Balakrishnan et al., 2017; Balganesh, 2013).

4.2 Key Characteristics of Trusteeship

Social Responsibilities over Self-Interest Trusteeship challenges the fundamental assumption of capitalism that individuals are self-interested, rational individuals that aim to maximize their gains. Instead, Gandhi's theory of Trusteeship is based on the assumption that individuals not only have a duty to themselves but also have the responsibility to serve others (Gandhi, 1942). He believed, "If I do my duty, that is, serve myself, I shall be able to serve others" (Gandhi, 1954). Accordingly, Gandhi suggested that each member of the society should utilize their resources (i.e., mental, moral, physical, and material resources) for the common interest and welfare of the society and not for maximizing their own self-interest (Prabhu & Rao, 1967).

In his moral vision, economic equality can be achieved by using non-violent ways of production and behaving as a "trustee" (instead of the owner) of the wealth created (Dasgupta, 1996). Gandhi explained:

> I am inviting those people who consider themselves as owners today to act as trustees, i.e., owners, not in their own right, but owners in the right of those whom they have exploited… Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth—either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry—I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. (Gandhi quoted in Prabhu & Rao, 1967, pp. 258–59)

Gandhi developed this theory of Trusteeship based on his knowledge of the Law of Trusts (Balganesh, 2013). Under the conception of Trusteeship, business owners were not forced to renounce their wealth or assets for others. Instead, they were to remain in possession of their wealth and were able to use it for their personal needs. However, they were expected to act as trustees over the rest and to use it for the welfare of society (Chakrabarty, 2015).

Interestingly, Trusteeship does not reject private property, which Gandhi saw as a necessary social evil. In summarizing Trusteeship, Gandhi observed that

> [i]t does not recognize any right of private ownership of property, except in as much as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare. (Gandhi as quoted in Hingorani, 1970, p. 102)

While Gandhi did not reject private property, he rejected the notion of "absolute property" as a natural right. Gandhi argues that the sense of entitlement associated with private property is dangerous as it undermines the duties and obligations of social actors (Balganesh, 2013). Gandhi asserts that "[T]he right to perform one's duties is the only right that is worth living for and dying for" (Gandhi quoted in Dasgupta, 1996, p. 46).

Through Trusteeship, Gandhi defines the rights and reciprocal obligations of business stakeholders (Balakrishnan et al., 2017). For businesses, Gandhi stated that

> What I expect of you, therefore, is that you should hold all your riches as a trust to be used solely in the interests of those who sweat for you and to whose industry and labor you owe all your position and property. I want you to make your labourers co-partners of your wealth. (Gandhi, 1928, p. 145)

In addition, Gandhi also believed that labor plays an important role in generating wealth for the capitalists and, therefore, deserves various rights such as the right decent minimum living wage, a clean working environment, and other facilities such as health care, nutritious food, and elementary education for their children (Dasgupta 1996; Balakrishnan et al., 2017). For labor, Gandhi asked them "to regard themselves as trustees for the nation for which they are laboring" Gandhi (1928, p. 250). Thus, Gandhi argued that Trusteeship would lead to cooperative industrial relations, as

> Capital and labor will be mutual trustees and both will be trustees of consumers…each believes his own interest is safeguarded by safeguarding the interest of the other. (Gandhi 1938, p. 162)

However, moving from a market-based transactional system to a transformative system prescribed by Trusteeship requires strong moral commitments (Balakrishnan et al., 2017), and therefore, Gandhi proposed *Aparigraha* and *Swaraj* as two core elements of Trusteeship (Dasgupta, 1996).

b) *Aparigraha* (nonpossession): Gandhi founded the idea of Trusteeship on the traditional Indian cultural practices of *Aparigraha* (nonpossession). He used *Aparigraha* to explain his views on individual preferences and wants. Contrary to the utilitarian principle of maximizing material happiness, Gandhi argued that Trusteeship ought to be rooted in the principle of nonpossession or *Aparigraha* because

> the selfish grasping for possessions of any kind not only violates the deeper purposes of our human odyssey but eventually breeds possessiveness and greed, exploitation and revenge. (Gandhi, quoted in Iyer, 1986, p. 9)

Ajit Dasgupta, a leading scholar of Gandhi's economic ideas, observes that

> Self-indulgence and the ceaseless multiplication of wants hamper one's growth because they are erosive of contentment, personal autonomy, self-respect and peace of mind… [I]t is from these that one's long-run happiness can be found, not just from obtaining what one likes at the moment." (Dasgupta as quoted in Balganesh, 2013, p.1716)

Gandhi believed in preference limitation or contentment as the source of happiness. He argues that such happiness does not result from the maximization of wants and

preferences but rather from the limitation of them. Explaining the concept, Aparigraha Gandhi stated,

> If by abundance you mean everyone having plenty to eat and drink and to clothe himself [themselves] with, enough to keep his [their] mind trained and educated, I should be satisfied. But I should not like to pack more stuff in my belly than I can digest and more things than I can every usefully use. But neither do I want poverty, penury, misery, dirt and dust in India. (Gandhi, 1938, p. 2)

Aparigraha is closely related to the concepts of "Bread labor" and "*Asteya"* – non-stealing. Through bread labor, Gandhi emphasizes an individual's duty to earn bread through physical labor (Balakrishnan et al., 2017). Bread labor (or earning with your own hands) was an alternative to mass economic production, which Gandhi found violent and exclusionary. Contrary to mass production, he saw bread labor as a non-violent and natural act (Vidaković, 2022). Relatedly, on many occasions, he suggested physical work as a duty that is imposed by nature and argued that it cannot be substituted by intellectual labor (Gandhi, 1962). Gandhi also found bread labor as a great equalizer and as a means to increase individual productivity (Dasgupta, 1996).

Asteya means non-stealing or not taking anything more than what we need. While articulating his view of Trusteeship, Gandhi argued:

> If I take anything that I do not need for [my] own immediate use, [and]keep it, I thieve it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day-to-day, and if only everybody took enough for himself [themselves] and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would[be] no man [individual] dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality so long we are thieving. (1960, p. 3)

According to Gandhi, the practices of *Asteya* and *Aparigraha* require *Swaraj* or self-rule/ self-restraint. As noted above, Gandhi's theory of Trusteeship could neither be implemented through coercion nor through market mechanisms. Instead, it is based on *Swaraj*, or self-rule, where individuals are guided by their own inner moral compass (Vidaković, 2022).

5 Relevance of Trusteeship in Contemporary Society

Trusteeship provides an alternative way to conceptualize economic development and the role and responsibility of business. Gandhi's work on Trusteeship has been influential in inspiring many streams of research, particularly, the ethical issues in businesses (Bhatt, 2022; Hota et al., 2023), sustainable consumption and production (Gruzalski, 2002; Parth et al., 2021), and degrowth (Hickel, 2020; Kallis, 2011). Trusteeship cultivates responsible behavior towards self, society, and nature and has influenced the way resources are used to address poverty (Sutter et al., 2023).

Influenced by Trusteeship, various studies have identified commoning as a strategy for collectivizing and reproducing resources for alternative organizing. The

issue of commodification of commons is a concern for sustainability as it directly affects individual and collective fulfillment (Dardot and Laval, 2014; Mattei, 2013). Commoning is the process of de-commodifying the commons, and therefore, it presents an ideological alternative to neoliberal organizing that is based on individual property ownership and waged labor (Bollier & Helfrich, 2014). While commoning does not represent a complete ban on commercial activity or individual consumption of common resources, it acknowledges the need to establish rules that govern the sale and consumption of common resources (Mattei, 2013). Commoning involves cultivating a mindset that allows communities to see themselves as trustees of those resources (Gandhi, 1945, cf. Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume). In this system, the community enforces rules around the care, responsibility, and use of the commons (Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a; Bollier & Helfrich, 2014; Qureshi et al., 2022b). Increasingly, there are many examples of self-organized and pro-social communities, inspired by the Gandhian model of Trusteeship, that have been engaged in a deliberate strategy of creating commons. For example, collective ownership of land and the building of grain banks provide an alternative way of generating resources for the common good (Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a; Qureshi et al. 2022b). Thus, Trusteeship has the potential to inform how the grand challenges of poverty, inequalities, and climate change could be tackled holistically through nonviolence and shared use of resources.

6 Conclusion

Gandhi's theory of trusteeship is a social and economic philosophy aimed at ensuring equitable distribution of wealth and consumption resources through the principles of nonviolence and nonpossession, with reciprocal obligations for stakeholders to serve the common interest of society. Trusteeship is proposed as an alternative to capitalism and communism, which Gandhi considered morally unacceptable. Gandhi's theory of Trusteeship is motivated by his spiritual, religious, and moral philosophy and is intrinsically connected to his principles of *Sarvodaya* through *Antyodaya*, which seek to uplift all by uplifting the most marginalized in society. Trusteeship seeks to create a moral economy based on cooperation and the common good, overcoming the negative consequences of capitalism. Trusteeship has broader implications and can be seen in various realms of societal relationships, including the sustainable use of resources through commoning.

The concept of Trusteeship, as introduced by Gandhi, has provided an alternative way to conceptualize economic development and the role and responsibility of businesses. It has influenced research in various areas, including ethical issues in businesses, sustainable consumption and production, and degrowth. Trusteeship promotes responsible behavior towards oneself, society, and nature and has inspired the way resources are used to address poverty. Commoning provides a framework for collective ownership and management of resources, which can reduce inequalities and address environmental concerns. However, the issue of commodification of

commons remains a concern for sustainability as it directly affects individual and collective fulfillment. Commoning needs to be complemented by policies and regulations that ensure fair access to and use of common resources. These policies should take into account the diversity of communities and their needs and aspirations and ensure that the rules are transparent and participatory. A balance needs to be struck between commercial activities and the protection of common resources so that the resources can be used for the common good while allowing for individual fulfillment.

We also note the underlying spiritual tenets of the Gandhian notion of Trusteeship. We argue that spirituality is a crucial element that has been backgrounded in *Western* economics and business activities. The reductionist approach to measuring the welfare of human beings through materialistic indicators such as GDP and per capita income reinforces this materialistic approach, leading to undesirable outcomes. The relational nature of happiness cannot be achieved through instrumental rationality, and humanity needs to move beyond profit maximization, greed, and consumerism to promote equal conditions for all people. Gandhi's economic thought underpinning Trusteeship emphasizes ethical and spiritual values as its core as he advocates for Trusteeship as an economic system based on nonviolence. Incorporating Gandhi's thought perspective into management education can lead to a non-violent and harmonious society. The Trusteeship concept encourages individuals to earn what they need to survive and share whatever surplus they have, treating laborers as co-partners of wealth and attending to their needs before claiming profit or surplus.

In summary, this chapter underscores the significance of Trusteeship as an alternative model for sustainable development, providing a comprehensive framework for promoting social responsibility and ethical leadership in business. Through the exploration of the historical development of Trusteeship, its key features, and its contemporary relevance, this chapter contributes to the ongoing debate on the role and obligations of individuals and businesses in fostering sustainable development.

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Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work

Babita Bhatt and Israr Qureshi

1 Introduction

Community-driven development initiatives, in which communities play an important role in designing and implementing development programs, are increasingly gaining prominence in management research (Bacq et al., 2022; Berrone et al., 2016; Bhatt et al., this volume-b; Mair et al., 2016; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). In this emerging discourse, communities are seen as active agents of change rather than passive beneficiaries of the entrepreneurial process (Sutter et al., 2019) and are considered as an alternative means of redressing the failures of capitalism by placing social and human concern at the heart of entrepreneurial activities (Bhatt et al., 2022; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Mishra & Shukla, this volume). Community-based social enterprises or community enterprises – collective enterprises emerging within communities and embedded in them (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006) – are one such example of community-driven development.

Community-driven development has a long existence (Fourcade & Healy 2007; Polanyi 1957). Gandhi envisioned it through his concept of *Gram Swaraj* (self-reliant, self-governed, and place-based communities) (Mishra & Shukla, this volume; Moolakkattu, this volume). However, their importance and visibility have increased in recent years largely for two reasons.

The first reason is the limitation of commercial enterprises in generating social, economic, and environmental value. Community-based initiatives such as community enterprises offer an alternative way to conceptualize the role and responsibilities of businesses (Barraket & Archer, 2010; Bhatt et al., 2013; Cucchi et al., 2022; Gibson-Graham et al., 2017a, b; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). Commercial

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businesses engaged in identifying new market opportunities, developing innovative products/processes, and achieving economies of scale for profit maximization are increasingly criticized for their detrimental impact on society and the environment (Bansal et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2022; Wickert, 2021). Increasing evidence shows how businesses driven by profit-oriented value creation logics are largely disembedded from social relations within the communities, resulting in external dependencies and leaving local communities vulnerable to external shocks (Ansari et al., 2012; Bhatt, 2017; Escobedo et al., 2021). In contrast, community-based initiatives are associated with the principles of mutual interdependence, trust, and norms of reciprocity that offer an alternative way to re-conceptualize the economy as a diverse and inclusive space (Barraket & Archer, 2010; Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a, b; Coraggio 2009; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Laville 2010; Mishra & Shukla, this volume).

The second reason is that the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the underlying structural inequalities of the current market system and brought resilient communities to the center of economic activities (Bacq et al., 2022; Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a; Mishra & Shukla, this volume). The failure of the market to address the crisis in a "human" way is well documented (Bapuji et al., 2020; Moolakkattu, this volume; United Nations, 2020). Various studies have shown how the top-down growth model, which overlooked the participatory role of communities, has worsened social well-being, economic inequalities, and environmental crises (Riaz, 2015; Sachs et al., 2022; Solanki, this volume). However, several community initiatives that emerged during the pandemic to address inequality, resource wastage, and resource scarcity show that unless communities are actively engaged, progress on sustainable development goals (SDGs) is unlikely (Escobedo et al., 2021). Importantly, as the challenges of poverty, inequality, and climate change are manifested at the community level, it is also pragmatic to develop solutions with and by the members of communities (Bacq et al., 2022).

While the interest in community-driven initiatives has increased, there is still little understanding of how these initiatives emerge, function, and are sustained (Bacq et al., 2022; Bhatt et al., this volume-b; Cucchi et al., 2022; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). In this chapter, we aim to explore the emergence of these community-based initiatives (particularly community enterprises) in resource-constrained communities (Hota et al., 2021; Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013a, b; Pandey et al., 2021, Parth et al., 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qiu et al., 2021, Qureshi et al., this volume). We argue that as these enterprises emerge within communities and are embedded in them (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006), the concept of community plays an important role in their emergence and requires a critical understanding. In extant research, communities are assumed to be homogeneous and their interests harmonious (Bhatt, 2017). On the contrary, we argue that this uncritical understanding of community often obscures local social structures and power dynamics that influence their emergence and outcome (cf. Bhatt et al., 2023). We elaborate on these power relations and how they affect community engagement and collective action. We then introduce the Gandhian concept of *constructive work* to show how to navigate these power relations. We also discuss various examples where organizations

have successfully used constructive work to navigate power relations and provide a future venue for research.

2 Community-Driven Development: Understanding the Nature of Community Enterprises

Community-based enterprises (CBEs) are collective enterprises that emerge within communities and are embedded in them (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). Contrary to commercial enterprises that are based on competition, self-interest, and economies of scale for profit maximization (Newbert, 2018), community enterprises are founded on the principles of solidarity, self-governance, and mutual self-reliance (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006). Notably, their key characteristics include synergy between social and economic goals, profit reinvestment in the mission, and social control over capital (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Additionally, the motivation to create these initiatives is rooted in local needs, resources, and innovation; is often non-economic (Bhatt et al., this volume-b; Gibson-Graham et al., 2017a, b); and does not necessarily involve the establishment of entrepreneurial ventures (Thorgren & Williams, 2023). As a result, these alternatives might emerge to strengthen socio-democratic elements in the economy, prioritize morals over economic values, and de-commodify the means of production (Parker et al. 2014; Wright, 2019). For example, research on community organizing in developed countries shows how the members of a community have come together to regenerate wastelands and protect biodiversity (Meyer, 2020). While the initiative started purely to protect natural resources, it has the potential to create entrepreneurial opportunities for the communities (Meyer, 2020). In that sense, these community initiatives are conceptually aligned with the research on community activism (Qureshi et al., 2017; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017), which highlights how communities could proactively undermine exploitative capitalist institutions by engaging in various actions. These actions could include encouraging collective actions to create and protect commons (Gibson-Graham et al., 2017a, b); rejecting hierarchy and centralized organizational structure (Reedy et al., 2016); and creating new norms and practices around democratic values and property rights (Peredo et al., 2020). Evidence suggests that these actions have the potential to make local communities resilient, especially in the face of repeated market failures (Bhatt et al., this volume-a, b; Qureshi et al., 2021a). However, despite their potential to bring transformative change in the social and economic spheres, community-based enterprises face various challenges for their emergence and sustenance, primarily because of the nature of the community and its situatedness in a place (Bhatt et al., this volume-b).

3 The Concept of Community and the Place-Based Politics

The concept of place is central to community-based initiatives, particularly to community enterprises. The place is a multidimensional concept that is broadly understood as a combination of physical and spatial location which encompasses not only the natural environments but also the cultural and social dimensions that give the place meaning (Cresswell, 2014; Gieryn, 2000; Guthey et al., 2014). The concept of the place plays an important role in the emergence and sustenance of various community-based initiatives (Slawinski et al., 2021). Since the members of the community enterprises are embedded in a specific place, their fate is tied to it (Shrivastava & Kennelly, 2013). They share a cultural history and the natural environment, such as forests and water bodies, that have cultural and temporal significance for people living there for generations (Bhatt et al., this volume-b).

Literature on community development shows how the common geographical location, shared history, and culture encourage members to participate in collective action (Bridger & Alter, 2008; Jennings, 2012). It is suggested that these characteristics of place create social networks, build trust, and generate norms of reciprocity (Putnam, 2000), which enable community members to identify local problems and resources and create common solutions. Crucially, the shared identity also helps in resolving collective action problems more easily (Putnam, 2000). It is explicitly recognized in the transaction cost argument that if people cooperate and trust each other, then the transaction cost will be lower, and each party will benefit from such a transaction (Coleman 1990; Williamson 1987). However, as rational choice theory suggests, collective action is almost always difficult to achieve because each member sees contributions to the collective as individual cost, but benefits are shared by all. Therefore, the proponents of this position argue that individuals benefit more (or at least relatively more) by shirking their responsibilities and hoping that others will do the work for them (Williamson 1987). As such, individuals always face an incentive to free-ride unless cooperation is forced by an external authority, provision of selective incentives, or privatization (Olson, 1989). To address these dilemmas, literature on community-based initiatives indicates that when individuals are embedded in a place and share multiple social, economic, and political relationships, the capacity for cooperation is increased (Bhatt, 2017). Further, as members participate in their own development through a democratic decision-making process, the outcomes are assumed to be equitable and empowering (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

However, as evidence from cooperatives and other community-led initiatives shows, such initiatives have limited success in increasing access to resources and reducing inequality because of "elite capture" (Bhatt et al., 2022; Platteau, 2004). The strong connections among the elites and their relative un-connectedness with the other community members could lead to the "hijacking" of community enterprises (Bhatt, 2017). This brings attention to the power dynamics in place-based communities.

Critics argue that the current narratives of community-driven development are based on the assumption that place-based communities are socially, culturally, and politically homogeneous and that the interests of their members are harmonious (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Bhatt, 2017, 2022). However, cultural heterogeneity and social hierarchies are also defining features of place (Bhatt et al., this volume-b; Qureshi et al., 2018b).[1] Place-based communities are culturally heterogeneous and composed of social groups organized in a hierarchical order. Membership in these social groups is not temporary or voluntary but is acquired by birth (Bourdieu, 1986). Such social hierarchies privilege one group over another and might result in different orientations toward community engagement. Therefore, the extant literature on place in sociology suggests that while places bring people together in bodily co-presence, the existing differences and hierarchy might be reinforced by extending or denying opportunities to groups based on their location in social positions (Bourdieu, 1986). As noted by Gieryn (2000), "place sustains difference and hierarchy both by routinizing daily rounds in ways that exclude and segregate categories of people, and by embodying in visible and tangible ways the cultural meanings variously ascribed to them" (p. 474). For example, the spatial division of labor between home and work, which idealizes women's domesticity, has profound consequences for their identities, opportunities, and safety (Gieryn, 2000; Qureshi et al., this volume). Similarly, the geographical segregation of marginalized castes based on the rituals of purity and pollution has severe implications for their autonomy and dignity (Bhatt et al., 2022; Chrispal et al., 2021; Rao & Sanyal, 2010). Thus, power dynamics rooted in socio-historical context and manifested through cultural practices, symbols, and rituals are crucial to understanding place-based community initiatives as they can substantially affect a group's ability to participate in a community endeavor (Bhatt et al., this volume-b). Research on poverty and collective action also suggests that the poor and marginalized cannot afford to get organized due to a lack of time, resources, and networks that are needed for such participation (Mansuri & Rao, 2004; Mosse, 2008). While the management research on place-based organizing discusses the benefits of being embedded in a place (Shrivastava & Kennelly, 2013), there is a limited understanding of how community-based initiatives confront and navigate these place-based hierarchies (Bhatt et al., this volume-b). In the following section, we discuss the Gandhian concept of constructive work as a potential mechanism to navigate place-based power dynamics.

[1] The diversity of opinions and contestations also exists in the virtual space (Qureshi et al., 2020, 2022a) and in the organizational environment (Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018a), but place-based communities are tied to their place and cannot exit the place, unlike virtual communities or organizational workforce which have the option to exit.

4 *Gram Swaraj* and Constructive Work

Gandhi envisioned *Gram Swaraj*, or village self-governance, a self-reliant, place-based community in which community members are actively involved in social, political, and economic development as an ideal society. In a self-governed.

village, economic relations are based on mutual interdependencies (Mishra & Shukla, this volume), and social and political relations are based on participatory decision-making (Mehta & Jacob, this volume). Gandhi also imagined *Gram-Swaraj*, founded on the principle of social equality, in which there are no class or caste divisions. As Gandhi said,[2]

> The Swaraj of my dream is the poor [person's] Swaraj. The necessaries of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by the princes and the moneyed men. But that does not mean that they should have palaces like theirs. They are not necessary for happiness. You or I would be lost in them. But you ought to get all the ordinary amenities of life that a rich man enjoys. I have not the slightest doubt that Swaraj is not Poorna Swaraj until these amenities are guaranteed to you under it.

However, as noted above, social-economic inequalities are the realities of place-based communities, and as various written documents show, Gandhi was acutely aware of the caste, class, and gender discrimination that exists in the communities. Therefore, in his work, Gandhi proposed constructive work as an important concept to navigate these social challenges in progressing toward Gram Swaraj.

4.1 Constructive Work as a Prefigurative Strategy

Constructive work is a key concept in Gandhian philosophy that emerged from constructive programs (Gandhi, 1945). As noted above, the origin of constructive work is rooted in Gandhi's Swaraj movement (self-rule or self-governance). It had two components: obstructive resistance and constructive resistance. As envisaged by Gandhi, constructive resistance meant engagement in constructive activities that had the potential to eventually make the communities self-reliant and thus help them overcome external dependence. The "resistance" in the term "constructive resistance" actually has a positive orientation towards prosocial activities rather than confrontation, which is better captured by the term *constructive work*.

> For the individual, constructive programme meant increased power-from-within through the development of personal identity, self-reliance, and fearlessness. For the community, it meant the creation of a new set of political, social, and economic relations. (Burrowes as quoted by Sheehan, 2014, p. 1)

Constructive work, as per Gandhi, refers to any action or effort that is aimed at building a more just, equitable, and sustainable society. It provides a path to resist

[2] https://www.mkgandhi.org/momgandhi/chap65.htm

and navigate dominant power by engaging in the act of creation through peaceful means (Gandhi, 1945). Constructive work can take many forms, including economic, social, cultural, and environmental initiatives. It can involve activities such as education, healthcare, community development, agriculture, and environmental conservation. The key characteristics of constructive work are the following:

4.1.1 Means-End Equivalence

Means-end equivalence describes a unique way of expressing commitment to a desired future in the present by aligning individual and organizational practices (means) with the future that is envisaged (ends) (Yates, 2015). It is an integral part of Gandhian philosophy, as Gandhi believed that instead of the end justifying means, the means must be consistent with that of the end (Javeri et al., this volume). Constructive work is a means that is intrinsically linked to Gandhi's vision of just, equitable, self-reliant communities that work for the betterment of all (i.e., *Sarvodaya*) and that foster a sense of personal responsibility and moral courage among individuals (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume). It progresses towards *Sarvodaya* by implementing various constructive programs that create solidarity and cooperation among individuals (Ghatak et al., this volume). Gandhi further believed that constructive work should be based on non-violence and the principles of truth and honesty, as any form of deception or dishonesty would undermine the value of the constructive work and would have moral consequences (Kumar et al., this volume). Additionally, constructive work, or the act of creating and implementing programs, should be for the common good, and not for personal gains (Mehta & Jacob, this volume). This means-end equivalence also distinguishes constructive work from similar concepts, such as scaffolding (Mair et al., 2016; Sutter et al., 2023). Scaffolding "describes processes that enable transformation in patterns of inequality in a community wherein the goal of reducing inequalities is concealed within another goal of the community, like how a scaffold masks the building inside" (Qureshi et al., 2022b, p. 3). Thus, constructive work rejects concealing or intentional deception to achieve the common good, which might be acceptable in scaffolding to build legitimacy and support from the community (Mair et al., 2016; Sutter et al., 2023).

4.1.2 Ensuring Dignity of Labor

Gandhi's approach towards social justice is rooted in the dignity of labor and is exemplified in the concept of constructive work, which involves community-based activities that aim to engage individuals in physical pursuits while concurrently establishing a new, fair social order. These actions implicitly challenge the established, unjust social order. Gandhi believed that constructive work was an essential tool to create a just and equitable society, as it provided individuals with opportunities to become agents of social change through their dignified physical pursuits.

However, the constructive work advocated by Gandhi went beyond mere physical activities and involved a deep sense of community engagement, awareness, and advocacy to highlight the dignity of labor. He believed that through such physical endeavors, individuals and communities could learn the value of cooperation, self-reliance, and self-respect. Gandhi's constructive work included activities that were valued by the community, such as building schools, constructing homes, and promoting agriculture. These activities aimed to promote self-sufficiency and reduce dependency on external forces by creating a culture of constructive work, using their own labor and skills, and resources available within the community.

The whole idea of dignity of labor aligns well with the Gandhian concept of "bread labor," which proposes that every person should do some form of physical labor to sustain themselves (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume). Gandhi believed in the importance of physical work for several reasons. He saw it as a natural act, a social obligation, and an action to increase productivity (Vidaković, 2022). Most importantly, he saw it as a great social equalizer, establishing the dignity of labor by ensuring that those who own wealth do not only donate their wealth but also their labor for social good (Ghatak et al., this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume).

4.1.3 Building Alliances and Networks: Sahyogi Mitra

The social hierarchies and inequalities within the place-based communities challenge the taken-for-granted assumption that the community as a unit could work together for its own development (Bhatt, 2022). As the emerging discourse on entrepreneurship and poverty explains, while the members of the community have local knowledge and are also the ones most affected by such change (Sutter et al., 2019), they might resist efforts towards change to protect their power and privileges (Bhatt et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., 2018b). Furthermore, the marginalized groups of the communities may lack adequate resources, knowledge, and expertise to affect change on their own (Hota et al., 2023). Thus, there is confusion in the literature on the role of insiders and outsiders in affecting change (Sutter et al., 2019). Constructive work provides a guideline to balance the insider-outsider role through *Sahyogi Mitra* (companion in constructive work). *Sahyogi Mitra* is an important element of constructive work, and Gandhi had a vision that *Sahyogi Mitras*, who had acquired expertise in making villages self-reliant, would adopt at least one village and help them achieve self-reliance (Ghosh, this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume; Mishra & Shukla, this volume). The role of *Sahyogi Mitra* is not to tell how to do things but to co-create with the community members the solutions that might be most sustainable given the local resources and skills (Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume).

4.1.4 Proactive, Long-Term Orientation

Constructive work is contrary to temporary, immediate, short-term resistance techniques (such as protests) and instead involves long-term, steady, generative efforts (Bhatt et al., 2022, this volume-b). It is organized around creating spaces and building local institutions that challenge exploitation and dispossession and transform power relations. As described above, in most cases, place-based communities are diverse and require long-term engagement to understand the concerns of marginalized as well as dominant social groups to structure constructive works so that inclusive participation is ensured. This can only be possible through intentional and gradual efforts that avoid overt conflicts and convince dominant groups to bring down social barriers and promote self-reliance in communities. The approach to constructive work in such cases prioritizes long-term processes that incorporate a deeper understanding of the community dynamics and a long-term engagement of the actors (including *Sahyogi Mitra*) (Bhatt et al., 2022). For example, for building an inclusive governance structure through community mobilization, Gandhi expected *Sahyogi Mitras* and other progressive members to spend a long time in the villages to enforce the idea of inclusion among the community members. Such long-term engagement could also involve building community infrastructure that addresses the social and economic needs of the members. In contemporary times, such infrastructure based on pluralistic orientations could include (but is not limited to) building grain banks, seed banks, microfinance lending structures, or women's solidarity groups. Thus, constructive work is a type of prefigurative strategy that combines futuristic orientation in the form of what is being *resisted* and what communities want to achieve with what is being *constructed* in the present, thus making the entire process a transformative experience (Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a, b; Parker et al., 2014).

5 Constructive Work in Current Literature

In recent years, there has been growing interest in reviving and adapting Gandhi's constructive program to the current time and context (Bhatt et al., this volume-a). Particularly, scholars working in resource-constrained environments have explored how community enterprises, social intermediaries, and non-governmental organizations could use constructive work as *inclusion work* (Hota et al., 2023) to navigate power relations (Bhatt, 2022; Qureshi et al., this volume). Some features of resource-constrained communities are important to highlight for this discussion. Studies in the context of resource-constrained environment describe how these communities suffer from extreme resource scarcity (Bhatt et al., 2019; Hota et al., 2019; Qureshi et al., 2016, 2021b, c, d; Zainuddin et al., 2022), resulting in a high degree of asymmetric resource interdependence among themselves, where dominant social groups have access to all the resources, and marginalized social groups depend on them to access these resources (Bhatt et al., 2022; Sutter et al., 2023). These communities

lack physical infrastructure (Qureshi et al., 2022b) that disconnects them from the government support structures. This is compounded by the fact that many of these communities do not have access to formal institutions, as they either do not exist or are not functional (Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021). These communities often include social groups that have very distinct cultures and languages and, at times, nurture hostility towards one another (Qureshi et al., 2018b), making it difficult to bring them under one universal, regional program. Due to a variety of socio-cultural orientations, the local needs of these communities are different, necessitating organizing variety of constructive work that leverages local resources to solve local problems (Bhatt, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2023; Kistuck et al., 2008, 2013a, b; Qureshi et al., 2023, this volume). Emerging research in management has applied Constructive Work in such contexts to show how economic dependencies and social hierarchies could be navigated. For example, Bhatt et al. (2022) show that in the social context where inequality is high but economic dependence among the social group is low, a social intermediary could use constructive work to build goodwill across different social groups through engaging in community-wide projects that work for common goods. Examples of such projects could include building community-level infrastructure such as small check dams, forestation, and a community garden. Some examples of constructive work are also reflected in *inclusion work,* which focuses on the recognition of the assets and resources in the communities to address social and economic marginalization (Hota et al., 2023). Constructive work is also an implicit underlying principle in many of the community initiatives discussed in community economics (Gibson-Graham et al., 2017a, b; Healy et al., 2021), although that stream of literature does not use the term explicitly nor develop their conceptualization directly based on Gandhian philosophy. That said, community economics is aligned with the Gandhian principle of self-reliant village economies where individual needs and social needs are integrated into economic activities. For example, community enterprises can be established to address an individual's need to get a decent job by providing employment; subsequently, they can also strengthen local communities by building social capital and economic infrastructure (Gibson-Graham, 2006). In such an economy, people negotiate and explore their commonalities and develop economic arrangements that reflect these commonalities. For example, the Opol Food Project could be considered another example of constructive work in practice. Opol Food Project is a communal gardening project in Mindanao with a goal to "support poor families in self-provisioning; generate income and livelihood opportunities for communal gardeners and to feed malnourished children in schools" (Hill, 2011). It is aligned with the principles of constructive work as it is started by the local people to address the local problems of malnutrition and unemployment. It also relies on the expertise, knowledge, and labor of community members to maintain the gardens (Hill, 2011).

While most of the studies have shown how constructive work can involve social and economic activities that meet the common needs of the members, recent research has also indicated the role of culture in constructive work (Bhatt et al., this volume-b). For example, building a new society on the old structure could be enacted in practice by awakening the creative capacity of individuals through

restoring past cultural practices. Culture is “a set of stories, rituals, and practices that actors draw upon to make meaning and take actions” (Giorgi et al., 2015, p. 6). As described earlier, some cultural practices of the place could be inclusionary, while others could be exclusionary. As such, using culture in constructive work would require an understanding of what types of symbols, rituals, and practices should be restored and what types of symbols, rituals, and practices need to be rejected. This intricacy between past, present, and future with the cultural practices could be described as *cultural temporality*. We encourage future research to explore the role of *cultural temporality* in constructive work. *Cultural temporality* might be particularly useful in understanding the emergence and sustenance of community enterprises. For example, community entrepreneurs could evoke memories, stories, or symbols from the past, alongside the stories of present injustice, to encourage participation and collective action for creating a just, inclusive society. Since the struggle to break free from poverty and inequality is as much a cultural process as it is political and economic (Rao & Sanyal, 2010), cultural temporality could provide new insights into constructive work.

6 Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought resilient communities to the center of economic activities and exposed the underlying structural inequalities of the current market system. Several community initiatives that emerged during the pandemic show that progress on sustainable development goals (SDGs) is unlikely unless communities are actively engaged. Relatedly, community-driven development (CDD) suggests that involving communities in designing and implementing entrepreneurial solutions can enhance community well-being and lead to transformative social change. However, the nature of the community in CDD remains unspecified. In this chapter, taking a place-based view of the community, we argued that communities are heterogeneous and hierarchical entities, and the power relations among social groups play an important role in the emergence, function, and sustenance of these community-led initiatives. Accordingly, we suggested that navigating these power relations is crucial for research and policy. One strategy to navigate power relations in CDD is Gandhi’s constructive work, a prefigurative strategy. We demonstrated how some community enterprises, social intermediaries, and non-governmental organizations use constructive work as *inclusion work* to navigate power relations in resource-constrained communities. Due to a variety of socio-cultural orientations, the local needs of these communities are varied, necessitating organizing various constructive works that leverage local resources to solve local problems. There has been growing recognition of the importance of culture in constructive work. However, this requires an understanding of *cultural temporality*. We encourage future research to explore the role of cultural temporality in constructive work, especially in understanding the emergence and sustenance of community enterprises.

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Gandhian Approach to Development: Implications for the Post-COVID World

John S. Moolakkattu

1 Introduction

COVID-19 and climate change have prompted many people to rethink notions of development and progress. The development of economics over the past two hundred years, although focused on material well-being, was often seen as a component of a larger framework of happiness or human flourishing. Before the early twentieth century, economics, politics, and ethics were all regarded as moral sciences, not only because they had moral consequences but also because they subscribed to moral standards for their intrinsic worth. However, in recent years, economics has disavowed its moral and political components to assert its scientific legitimacy (Prabhu, 1995). Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*[1] demonstrates the unsustainability and eventual self-destruction of our current lifestyle and notions of development. We destroy ourselves when we harm our environment. What chance do we have of remaining on this planet if our lifestyle damages it? Our planet's ecological risks were not fully comprehended during Gandhi's time. Gandhi claimed that eco-friendliness would follow the virtues of being thrifty, sparing with resources, and respecting the planet and its inhabitants. He made the ethical connection between individual behavior and environmental protection, which we now find difficult to accept fully (Paranjape, 2010).

Gandhi had the view that ethics and health are closely related. Health and morality go hand in hand (Gandhi, 1969). Gandhi did numerous experiments on his body and many others in his ashrams (Gandhi, 1969). Since others could benefit from his

[1] *Hind Swaraj*, meaning Indian home rule, is a book written by M. K. Gandhi in 1909.

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experiments and adopt a self-discipline routine, Gandhi was more concerned with their success. He tried to persuade people to change their behavior to rebuild India (Alter, 1996). Gandhi was also critical of a lifestyle that constantly required medical care, notably one that he said was the root of ailments and was characterized by gluttony and irregular habits (Gandhi, 1969, CW 4, p. 373). Gandhi thought that herbal remedies were the path to good health. Because health and strength are two entirely different aspects, he encouraged the children at the *ashram*[2] to engage in frequent, moderate exercise, practice *pranayama,*[3] and take in lots of fresh air (Gandhi, 1969). Gandhi also started to see Yoga as a non-violent form of physical training that would give *satyagrahis* (non-violent resisters) the ability to withstand extreme cold and heat, stand vigil for prolonged periods, take beatings, and care for others. Gandhi advocated the limitation of wants. It was the opposite of classical and neoclassical economics in the West, which said that the production possibility frontier was constantly growing. The latter notion is the cornerstone of today's concern with growth economics in almost every branch of Western economic theory. John Stuart Mill (1986) stood out among the significant classical thinkers by advocating for a "stationary state" to preserve the planet's resources. Thorstein Veblen (1967) spoke out against ostentatious spending. Gandhi's opinions, in and of themselves, were in line with the worries of these progressive intellectuals. The current epidemic gives us another chance to think about what Gandhi said about Western culture.

2 Self-Rule or *Swaraj* and Self-Reliance or *Swadeshi*

For both the person and the nation, *Swaraj* was the goal. *Swaraj* for the country will result from *Swaraj* at the individual level, where each person will have become his or her own sovereign (Ghatak et al., this volume; Mukherjee, 2009). In a letter to Nehru clarifying his idea of an ideal village, Gandhi writes,

> You will not be able to understand me if you think that I am talking about the villages of today. My ideal village still exists only in my imagination. After all every human being lives in the world of his own imagination. In this village of my dreams the villager will not be dull – he will be all awareness. He will not live like an animal in filth and darkness. Men and women will live in freedom, prepared to face the whole world. There will be no plague, no cholera and no smallpox. Nobody will be allowed to be idle or to wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to do body labour. (Gandhi quoted in Iyer, 1986a, p. 278).

In small, self-sufficient villages, craftspeople and farmers exemplified the self-sufficiency and autonomy Gandhi cherished. His vision differed significantly from modern India's industrializing, business-friendly, and techno-enthusiastic agenda that permeates modern India. The *Swaraj* concept of Gandhi is not just about

[2] A spiritual retreat.

[3] (In yoga) the regulation of breath through certain techniques and exercises.

developing independent states but also about developing individuals and local communities. It is vital for countries that are food insecure and dependent on imports to think about a new type of food system in order to achieve self-sufficiency and ensure food security on a long-term basis. Supply channels in the national and international food systems should be diversified to ensure minimal disruptions. Local governments should construct resilience to improve the food supply chain. The localized food systems increase any nation's or territory's chance of survival and balance supply-side shocks during future crises like pandemics (Glaab & Partzsch, 2018; Parth et al., 2021).

On food and nutrition matters, the idea of *Swaraj* anticipated the modern call for food sovereignty. Food was an issue during the early stages of COVID-19 when the sudden lockdown was clamped. It sometimes also led to the fight against genetically modified crops, which the farmers thought undermined the idea of seed sovereignty. In other words, it was a plea for *Swaraj* and *Swadeshi* with respect to food production and control over seeds. By extension, it applies to the protection of all other food sources. Instead of using imported food items, it suggests the need for growing and using locally produced grains, including millets. Food sovereignty can be achieved through organic agriculture, which resists food colonialism. Further, the idea can be a bulwark against monocultures, the continued loss of biodiversity, and the disempowerment of farmers forced to cultivate genetically modified food crops. Organic agriculture uses locally produced manures based on local biomass (Glaab & Partzsch, 2018). There will be no shortage of simple but nutrient-rich food if all are engaged in manual labor for it. Gandhi was against giving a free meal to a person who was not disabled. Such practices will make people indolent and are a misplaced charity. What is self-reliance? Galtung et al. (1981) write that it is an approach to overcoming dependence, the source of exploitation.

> The concept stands for autonomy, self-rule, being master over oneself, but not for autarchy, for isolating oneself. Historically it is nothing but the way in which human beings used to live when humankind was mostly organized in units independent of each other, because there were few of them. But as history proceeded, patterns of dependency, with their concomitant, exploitation, became the dominant aspect of the world system. Hence, self-reliance today is a way of fighting dependency, or more generally, of counteracting the power of others over oneself. This means counteracting both normative power, remunerative power (the power of the carrot) and punitive power (force, the power of the stick. (p. 161)

As Gandhi's thoughts on *Swaraj* became clearer, he also began to consider the type of education that would support *Swaraj* and the village-based model of development and governance that he suggested for India. In 1937, Gandhi brought together prominent educators to conceive a different educational system he appropriately named *Nai Talim*, or new education. In such schools, besides spinning, additional proposed productive activities included pottery, leathercraft, woodcraft, village cleanliness and sanitation programs, training in conflict resolution techniques, budgeting, planning, and cooking. Agriculture, animal husbandry, observation of the biodiversity (plants, trees, birds, animals, and insects) of surrounding areas, and analysis of the local geology (soil, rock, and minerals) were all part of the education. Such an

education, provided in the mother tongue, will teach the learners about the science behind many existing village crafts and the methods of improving their efficiency by reducing the level of physical exertion needed to carry them out. They will also equip them to identify the locally available economic and cultural resources and use them for addressing basic human needs without seeking such resources and help from outside (Prakasha, 1985). Primary education will give the learners some understanding of the workings of the human body and the maintenance of health in the way of nature, including medicinal plants' benefits (Sykes, 1988). Some commentators see a connection between the philosophy informing *Nai Talim* and the experiments of the Zapatista movement[4] in the Chiapas region of Mexico (Patil & Sinha, 2022).

Galtung (1976) suggests *ecological equilibrium*[5] would be easier to achieve with self-reliance. When ecological processes are disrupted, the effects of production and consumption on pollution and resource depletion become more obvious and immediate. The farmers, who typically produce what they consume, instinctively know that pollution and resource exhaustion will be harmful to them and their descendants, and this instinctual knowledge might stop ecological problems from ever emerging (Galtung, 1976).

The anarchist streak in Gandhi is visible in his understanding of *Swaraj*. He argued, "Representatives will become unnecessary if the national life becomes so perfect as to be self-controlled. It will then be a state of enlightened anarchy in which each person will become his own ruler" (Gandhi quoted in Mukherjee, 1993). Gandhi's construction of *Swaraj* had four elements. Three were related to Indian independence, economic liberty, and enjoyment of political rights, and the fourth one was individual self-governance, without which the other components would be hollow (Parel, 2000).

In health, self-awareness refers to awareness of one's mind, body, conscience, and behavior. Food selections must be under control, and drug misuse must be avoided. Health is independence – to be *Atma Nirbhar* (self-sufficient) and not rely on others for one's well-being. Gandhi wanted us to reduce our reliance on the government, pharmaceutical companies, and medical professionals. The location of the health services unit must be at the village level. A Village Health Worker (VHW), chosen from inside the village, is required to serve as the community's primary healthcare provider. The goal is to empower people to take control of their health by lowering healthcare costs and making it available locally and affordable for all. They spread the notion of *Arogya Swaraj*, which means "people's health in people's hands." This is to be accomplished through preventive health and building up the defenses against the disease within one's body, living in harmony with nature, maintaining a balanced diet, and being one's own doctor (Gandhi, 1947).

[4] Originally a revolution against the rise of neo-liberalism; advocated education based on ancestral wisdom to build autonomous communities protecting indigenous culture and dignity.

[5] It means the equilibrium or balance between living organisms such as human beings, plants, and animals, as well as their environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a situation where the supply chains established due to globalization have broken down. Gandhi did want India to practice *Swadeshi* and to serve as an example for the rest of the world so that people might live happily while coexisting peacefully with others and the natural world (Kumar et al., this volume). Gandhi's *Swadeshi* is not about self-reliant India. It is more about people who practice self-help at the local level. It is because people organised in the villages constitute the basis of Bharat,[6]and it is at this level that *Swadeshi* principles should be practised.

Healthcare services and other systems for coping have become susceptible as a result of the epidemic. The COVID-19 epidemic was fiercely fought by local governments. When it came to the war against the virus, mayors and the leaders of local governments were on the front lines around the world ahead of heads of state (Gao & Yu, 2020). Following COVID-19, calls have been made to achieve national self-sufficiency rather than relying on foreign markets. One oddity of COVID-19 is that it has pushed even developed nations to rely on other countries, like China, who have an unheard-of advantage due to the distorted supply chains (Free & Hecimovic, 2021). The idea of self-reliance means doing everything independently to the maximum extent possible. Nowadays, when we talk about self-reliance, it is about achieving self-reliance at the level of the nation. True self-reliance should be cultivated at the level of individuals and local communities through their own efforts.

Self-sufficiency in food production is essential because it will stop any nation or region from using food as a weapon in a crisis. Additionally, self-reliance guarantees that regional resources are used to their utmost potential, encouraging regional inventiveness and building confidence in one's own institutions and technologies. Additionally, it guarantees reduced alienation, contributes to the preservation of the environment, and fosters horizontal solidarity (Javeri et al., this volume). It offers a way to stop others from taking advantage of you and reducing your dependence. Naturally, independence and freedom increase with self-reliance.

The idea of *Swadeshi* does not have an exclusive economic connotation. Gandhi describes *Swadeshi* as the "spirit in us which restricts us to the use and services of our immediate, to the exclusion of the more remote" (Gandhi, 1947). It means adhering to one's own religion, purging it of its defects rather than embracing new ones, reposing faith in the indigenous political institutions, making use of economic goods produced in the neighborhood, and having faith in the organizational capabilities of the Indian people, which he said is evident from the organization of the *Kumbha Mela*.[7] Gandhi suggested that proselytization, adoption of foreign forms of government, and education in the English language should be shunned. Goods locally produced alone should be consumed to the maximum extent possible. Gandhi also said that practicing *Swadeshi* entails some sacrifices in the form of learning to do without certain things that one is used to or deems necessary. It is

[6] Another short name is provided for the Republic of India in its constitution. It is also used to refer to the marginalized in India.

[7] Considered among the largest religious congregation of Hindus with participation exceeding 200 million at present.

exclusive in one sense but inclusive in that the practice is not undertaken in competition with or antagonistic to another. Gandhi used the Latin expression sic *utere tuo ut alienum non laedas*, which means *the use of one's property in such a manner as not to deny the lawful rights of others.* He also added, "to reject foreign manufactures, merely because they are foreign and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one's country of manufactures for which it is not suited would be criminal folly and a negation of the Swadeshi spirit" (Gandhi, 1969, p. 126).

We frequently have a tendency to view Swadeshi in a limited, nationalist sense. Local independence does not rule out the potential for solidarity with other spatial levels, but such solidarity is unrelated to questions of power (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume). In terms of health and Swadeshi, Alter (1996) claimed that Gandhi was a staunch advocate of naturopathy, but on occasions, particularly near the end of his life, he realized that the body might need selective contemporary medical procedures.

2.1 Trusteeship

Gandhi disagreed with the vast majority of socialists who thought that they must seize control of the state before enacting effective reforms. For him, enlightened people could start with the task of shedding what is redundant while becoming honest trustees of their personal wealth. The trustee should have a keen awareness of the needs that go unmet by others and also be able to rein in and change one's own appropriating tendencies. The notion of trusteeship may be made to function once the mental barrier has been removed by letting go of the need for a mechanically equal distribution – something Gandhi firmly believed would never be possible. Instead, he adhered to the ideal of fair distribution, which would be both attainable and essential in the non-violent socialist state. The limitation of our wants is crucial here. We need to simplify our needs and wants if we are going to apply our unique abilities, gifts, faculties, and skills in the most intentional and caring way possible. Gandhi also believed that once the trusteeship idea gains traction, the very notion of philanthropy as we understand it today will change (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Iyer, 1986b).

No private sector organization has emerged as an example of trusteeship practice, one where the employees, employers, and managers see themselves as trustees to develop and utilize wealth for the good of the community, retaining the minimum for meeting basic needs. The two known experiments of trustee organizations[8] in India – one of which failed and the other still in operation – also do not provide any

[8] Before the establishment of the first such industrial unit (Khira Trusteeship Project Private Ltd.) in Pune in 1981 on the initiative of an industrialist and a few supporters of the trusteeship principle, there was not a single trusteeship-based organization in India. It initially operated well for more than 3 years before closing down in 1985. In the cooperative sector, the second trusteeship organization in India was founded in Mehsana (Gujarat) in November 1985, which is still operational (Ghosh, 1989).

scope for empirical generalization because proponents of the trusteeship ideal founded both. They also benefited from starting in a protected market with conditions specifically made to support their business (Ghosh, 1989).

3 Ecological Equilibrium

Kenneth Boulding was the first in the group of economists concerned with the environment (1966). He used the metaphor of the Earth as a spaceship with limited or scarce resources on board to stress the necessity for us to alter our careless consumption and production practices in order to assure our survival. Socially responsible production and consumption should be inculcated and encouraged (Parth et al., 2021). Boulding's thesis was that people's perceptions of how to interact with the environment had undergone a protracted shift. The "cowboy economy" was replaced by the "spaceman economy," which was a closed system, a single earthly "spaceship," in which human beings would have to locate themselves in a recurring ecological system that was capable of continual reproduction but constrained by energy inputs[9] (Boulding, 1966). He also did not think that economics was a value-free science and described it as a moral science (Boulding, 1969).

The finiteness of the physical universe, which implies limits on the economic process, was highlighted by Georgescu-Roegen (1971). This was also the focus of the "Limits to Growth" study (Meadows et al., 1972). Others believed that national income was, at best, a measure of economic welfare. However, economic welfare accounts for a very small portion of and can often be a poor measure of human well-being (Scitovsky, 1976). Scitovsky offered a number of justifications and pieces of evidence to support the idea that "greater growth" did not always equate to "more happiness" or "more well-being" and that people do not find accumulating and consuming material goods to be all that gratifying. When fundamental material needs are met, people tend to become more preoccupied with relative riches than absolute wealth and start participating in more risky behavior, including conspicuous consumption, that Veblen (1967) referred to. The research on happiness also suggests that possession of greater material goods and higher consumption levels do not automatically translate into happiness. Gandhi said, "Civilization in the real sense of the term consists not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary

[9] The Cowboy Economy stands for maximum production and consumption. In such an economy, the extent to which one is able to produce goods, using the factors of production, is the criterion of success and is oblivious to the consequences that it has on the environment and human life. Throughput is by no means a desirable factor in the spaceman economy, and it should really be viewed as something to be decreased rather than enhanced. The nature, scope, quality, and complexity of the entire capital stock – which includes the state of the human bodies and minds incorporated into the system – are the key indicators of economic success, not production and consumption at all. Since stock maintenance is the fundamental concern in the spaceman economy, any technical advancement that makes it possible to maintain a given total stock with a lower throughput (i.e., with less output and consumption) is unquestionably beneficial (Boulding, 1966).

reduction of wants, which promotes happiness and contentment and increases the capacity for service" (Gandhi, 1947). Social scientists and those working in the field of public policy increasingly use happiness measurement to assess well-being. Drawing on the experience and advocacy of Bhutan, the happiness index is increasingly receiving global attention, with the UN publishing a World Happiness Report of the national happiness of individual countries every year.

Gandhi was not purely anthropocentric in his thinking, but he was also unwilling to let the issue of human life be disregarded in environmental debates. He demonstrated how a completely sustainable method of managing human affairs that had a smaller impact on the environment could be developed. He also demonstrated how humans could coexist peacefully with nature. It is understandable why the phrase "the Earth has enough for everyone's need, but not for anyone's greed" has become a catchphrase for modern environmental movements. Gandhi believed that the current environmental crisis, which includes deforestation, soil and biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change, is merely a symptom and not a disease. The sickness is treated by a good doctor, not the symptom. The universal growth and development patterns used as models are what the sickness is all about (Nair & Moolakkattu, 2018). Climate change experts say that the magnitude of changes required postulates the early adoption of a decarbonized lifestyle leading to bigger systemic changes. The ultimate causes of greenhouse gas emissions are made explicit by referring to our ways of doing, having, consuming, and presenting things such as food, clothing, housing, and socialization. As a result, lifestyle modifications can significantly impact one's carbon footprint (Saujot et al., 2020). Gandhian ideas provide a strong basis for such transformations.

Gandhi wanted full employment, which he thought was unattainable in the capitalist mass production order with increasing mechanization (Narayan & Sethi, 2018). Everyone should be able to find work that will allow them to support themselves. The path toward full employment is through the vivification of khadi and cottage industries as a supplement to agriculture. Only if the people are able to produce the most basic necessities of life in an unfettered manner, this vision can be achieved globally. Any nation, state, or group of people monopolizing production and the market would be engaging in unfair practices. The abandonment of this straightforward principle is at the root of poverty, not just in India but anywhere in the world (Gandhi, 1928).

While many Gandhians tried to elaborate Gandhian economics in terms of the fair distribution of goods, it was Kumarappa who placed his ideas within an ecological framework (Lindley, 2018). According to Kumarappa (1958), village industries should come second in the strategy for an independent India after providing for basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter. His approach strongly focused on social fairness, radical decentralization of political power, and village-level self-sufficiency to develop an "economy of permanence" that is ecologically regenerative. (Kumarappa, 1958). He thoroughly analyzed how industrial-imperial economics continued to wage violence against people and the environment and envisioned such an economy within the broader general non-violent ethical framework (Kumarappa, 1944, 1958; Govindu & Malghan, 2016).

Ten years before the start of the Green Revolution,[10] Kumarappa warned against the use of oil-powered tractors and artificial fertilization, which would reduce soil fertility and eradicate earthworms. Decentralized agricultural studies and practices were in line with the broader Gandhian approach to rural development during initial Indian planning deliberations. They were, however, excluded from politics and later vanished from descriptions of the Green Revolution. He said that it is detrimental to rely on foreign sources of motor power for the production of our food, urging the continued use of "manpower, animal power, and windmill power" and defining dependency broadly to include sources other than the import of food grains (Kumarappa, 1951). He criticized American farming methods as being ineffective and, more importantly, made the connection between them and the colonial appropriation of resources like land and fossil fuels.

An "economy of permanence," in Kumarappa's opinion, should be based on the use of local resources. We can control the manufacturing processes if we produce all we need locally; however, if we source our needs from remote regions of the world, it becomes more challenging for us to regulate the local production conditions. A common theme in most of Kumarappa's works is the cautious management of natural resources in the agrarian economy. He emphasized the importance of using human excreta as manure and suggested that incentives be offered to individuals as a way to get around caste restrictions on converting human waste and village waste into fertilizer. Additionally, Kumarappa focused on preventing soil erosion and water logging to maintain soil quality (Kumarappa, 1958).

The idea of degrowth has also gained currency recently (Hickel, 2020; Kallis, 2011), with a strong Gandhian and Kumarappan overtone. Degrowth is a concept that has its origins in the radical Western environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which was led by two renowned women: Rachel Carson, who wrote *Silent Spring* in 1962, and Donella Meadows, who co-authored *The Limits to Growth Report* of 1972. The political, cultural, and existential critique of capitalist modernity contained in the works of Cornelius Castoriadis and Erich Fromm serves as the second source. The third is the traditional current in ecological economics, which is particularly well represented in the writings of Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen. Fourth, a critique of "progress" that sees it not as a means of achieving emancipation but rather as a means of maintaining Western capitalism's hegemony, as seen in the writings of Arturo Escobar or Ivan Illich. Degrowth thus goes further than the critique of GDP growth from an ecological standpoint. It involves a more comprehensive assessment of what makes an existentially meaningful manner of coexisting and incorporates ideas like horizontality, fellowship, compassion, healing, and simplicity that transcend their European roots to more accurately reflect the realities of the global south (Gerber, 2020). A solidarity economy and the idea of degrowth share many core values, including a preference for basic needs, rejection of consumerism, support for equality, emphasis on quality relationships, the balance

[10] The period starting in the 1960s when agriculture in many parts of India moved to more mechanized solutions with high-yielding variety of seeds, etc.

between people and nature, and recognition of the environment's intrinsic value, which goes beyond treating it as an economic resource. The solidarity economy has strong similarities with Gandhian economic ideas (Nair, 2020).

4 Panchayati Raj

Gandhi said, "Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic, or panchayat, with full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustaining and capable of managing its affairs, even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world" (Gandhi, 1947). He said such a structure consisting of thousands of villages will be organized in an ever-widening and non-hierarchical manner. They will be like an oceanic circle, starting from the individual who is prepared to sacrifice himself for the village community, and the village community in turn for larger spatial levels. Such bigger spatial levels will not crush the village; instead, they will strengthen everyone inside and draw strength from the village, the source of all power (Gandhi, 1947). While the principle of subsidiarity is often conceived in the form of granting power from the above, the obverse is what Gandhi had envisaged. The ultimate source of all power is the individual and, through him or her, the village panchayat. The powers that cannot be exercised at that spatial level alone are transferred to other levels.

Gandhi's village will have a livestock reserve and a playground for kids and adults. If additional land becomes accessible, it will selectively produce commercial crops. A theater, school, and community center will remain in the village. There will be wells, tanks, and compulsory basic education (Gandhi, 1947). The community will be governed by a Panchayat, which consists of five eligible people (men and women) annually chosen. During its one-year term, the Panchayat will serve as the combined legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government. Gandhi was not a fan of the Gram Sabha exercising its power directly. Still, he had no issues with the idea of recalling the elected five or constituting a committee of the Sabha. This is founded on his conviction that a large group of individuals cannot objectively and fruitfully deliberate on a subject (John, 2007).

5 Cooperatives

Gandhi was an ardent advocate of cooperatives. He believed this was the way forward for small farmers, instead of cultivating their small parcels individually. He found cooperative cattle rearing particularly necessary for the welfare of the individual owners of the cattle and the animals themselves. The individual farmer's life becomes miserable with filth and foul smell surrounding his home if the number of animals he cares for increases, with the accompanying filth and foul smell. To avoid leaving the male buffaloes to starve and die, he must sell the calves or kill them.

This inhumanity could have been avoided if the cattle were cared for cooperatively. Animals in collective cattle husbandry would receive veterinary care when they became ill. The average farmer needs help to cover this independently (Gandhi, 1947).

Gandhi aimed to create a society free of rivalry because he believed it always resulted in violence. He envisioned a community of equals where everyone had limited material wants, performed manual and intellectual labor, which were of equal status, and received relatively equal wages determined by needs. He was against growth that was defined by an artificially fueled, competitive drive for wealth and power (Rosen, 1982). Gandhi's economic principles called for regulating machinery's excesses rather than total annihilation. *Khadi*[11] calls for decentralized consumption and manufacturing, which should occur as close as possible to the point of the source of production (Weber, 1999).

One idea that seems to have a close affinity with Gandhian economic ideas is the notion of a sufficiency economy popularized in Thailand, which generally supports both capitalism and globalization but seeks to apply Buddhist ideals to economics by insisting on moderation, mindfulness, and risk aversion. Buddhist economics in other forms, like Schumacher's, offer more extreme anti-capitalist views of how Buddhist teachings should be applied to the structure of contemporary society (Schumacher, 1973). Schumacher heavily drew from Gandhi and Kumarappa when developing his Buddhist economics theory (Weber, 1999). It is, therefore, fair to say that Gandhian economics is much more comparable to Schumacher's concept of Buddhist economics than the sufficiency economy in Thailand (Noy, 2011).

Gandhi saw wealth and poverty as symptoms of a more fundamental bio-moral problem. His ashram experiments, each of which was more revolutionary than his revolutionary political experiments in many ways, were meant to institutionalize equality. It was not carried out to distribute wealth. The objective was to build and reproduce self-sufficiency based on limited communal demands, in opposition to the urge – at the level of people, communities, and nations – to acquire and consume more and more. He believed that a natural cure was the best way to achieve the goal of accomplishing public health self-reliance, even while admitting that it cannot relieve and cure all ailments. In such a paradigm, there is no contradiction or conflict in treating the fever of a landless laborer and the corpulence of a constipated millionaire with the same medical treatment (Alter, 2019).

6 Conclusion

Many people who today seem to borrow Gandhi for the cause of ecology are missing an important aspect of his non-violent politics. The ethical, self-denial, and truth-seeking claims of the ascetic implicit in Gandhi's ideas seem to appeal to

[11] Hand-spun and woven natural fiber cloth, which was promoted by Gandhi during the *Swadeshi* movement in India's freedom struggle.

many modern environmental movements. However, more comprehensive and full-fledged Gandhian environmental politics must acknowledge that such claims are inextricably linked to the aggressive political approach of the warrior, which involves engaging in disruptive, defiant, yet peaceful politics and constantly confronting the injustice of current socio-political structures (Godrej, 2012). For Gandhi, Swaraj also meant not looking up to the government for action but taking action independently of the government wherever possible. This calls for the vivification of a vibrant civil society and the voluntary sector.

Paths to development, as enshrined by Gandhi, are not unique. There are other thinkers whose ideas approximate this notion (Ajl & Sharma, 2022), and increasing management and organization scholarship is recognizing the importance of inclusive development (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Bhatt, 2017, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2013, 2019, 2022, 2023, this volume-a, b; Hota et al., 2019, 2023; Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013b; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a; Qureshi et al., 2016, 2018b, 2020, 2022a, 2023, this volume; Sutter et al., 2023). There is a renewed emphasis on digital social innovation (Parthiban et al., 2020a, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2017, 2018a, 2021d; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017), technoficing (Qureshi et al., this volume; Qureshi et al., 2021d, 2022b), social intermediation (Kistruck et al., 2013a; Pillai et al., 2021b), sharing economy models for marginalized (Bhatt et al., 2021; Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2021; Qiu et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c), inclusive markets (Parthiban et al., 2020b; Zainuddin et al., 2022), and responsible consumption (Parth et al., 2021) and environmental issues (Bansal et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2022). This stream of research can benefit from Gandhian insights.

We have to rethink the neoliberal models and the belief that superior technology will provide answers to climate change. The first traces of such criticism emerged during the 2008 global financial crisis. More than a focus on ecological issues, at that time, many became aware of how disembedded the economy was from the Polanyian perspective. The time has come for developing two forms of action, one centered on self-reliance and the other built on solidarity with the needy everywhere. Self-reliance stands in the way of exploitation by the more powerful. But self-reliance should not lead to insularity. It should allow us to engage with others in a spirit of solidarity built on the equality principle. Gandhi also urges us to build a form of health Swaraj in the villages and take charge of our health by minimizing our dependence on external actors.

Gandhian approach to development suggests that we address most of our vital needs, including food, shelter, clothing, health, and leisure, through actions mediated through local institutions. The type of villages that Gandhi envisaged is nowhere near the existing villages. Gandhi wanted to capitalize on the strength of a reformed rural India in his ideal order. The focus would be on the poorest. Although Gandhi does not directly suggest the creation of the "ashram" model as an intentional community, it would have a demonstration effect on society, as many utopian socialists believed. Such communities are characterized by people who receive support from others and assume responsibility for others, experience

a sense of decision-making power within the community, adhere to ecological or environmental principles, promote activities that enhance the artistic and creative spirit, and adhere to principles of redistribution in a spirit of solidarity (Nogueira et al., 2022).

Gandhi's Talisman that when public decisions are made, one must consider how they would affect the lowliest of the lowly has been ignored by policymakers in India. For the poor and migrant workers of India, the lockdown created a situation of untold miseries, and the suggested solutions of self-quarantine and social distancing were beyond their reach. Instead of building a USD five trillion economy in India, meeting the basic needs of the average person should receive prioritized attention. Though we have strayed from Gandhi's ideas, we can still move in that direction by making small changes to lessen the adverse impacts of globalization and capitalism.

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School Education for Today: Extending Tagore and Gandhi's Idea of a Good Society (*Swaraj*) and Its Accompanying New Education (*Nai Talim*)

Pallavi Varma Patil and Sujit Sinha

1 Introduction: Gandhi and Tagore's Swaraj

The study of action or progress is biased toward theories of social sciences and trajectories of development formulated in the West. The genius of early twentieth-century visionaries Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore has been given only cursory treatment, if any at all. The onward rush for industrialization in the twentieth century made Gandhi and Tagore appear irrelevant, with their contributions pigeonholed into categories of peace and nonviolence or oriental poetry in India and the world. But today, multiple converging crises[1] give us a compelling reason to

[1] At the time of writing this paper in November 2022, the global average carbon dioxide was at 419 parts per million (Daily Co2, 2022). This level of global warming has clear links with extreme and unpredictable weather, sea level rise, and recession of glaciers. The climate crisis is accompanied by the breaching of other planetary boundaries: biodiversity loss, land-system change, biogeochemical cycles, atmospheric pollution, and freshwater use. All these amplify the existing poverty and vulnerability of marginalized groups (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Bhatt, 2017, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2013, 2022, this volume-a, b; Hota et al., 2019, 2023; Kistruck et al., 2013a; Pandey et al., 2021; Parth et al., 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qureshi et al., 2017, 2020, 2021a, b, c, d, 2022a, b; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017; Sutter et al., 2023; Zainuddin et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of our distorted relationship as humans with nature and continues to pose a threat crippling health and economic conditions. The World Inequality Report, 2022, highlights the rising trend of extreme social and economic inequalities worldwide (cf. Qureshi et al., 2018b, 2023;

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revisit and reappraise Gandhi and Tagore's vision of a good society and their educational ideals.

In this section, through Gandhi and Tagore's writings, we show how their vision of civilization and progress contrasted with the ideology of industrialism. We define industrialism as a quest for unlimited material growth, fueled by strong centralized nation-states, with its accompanying representative democracy, and nature conquering science and technology.

As early as 1909, Gandhi, in his seminal booklet Hind Swaraj in Chapter Six titled "Civilization," had this to say about limits from a moral-spiritual perspective:

> The mind is a restless bird, the more it gets the more it wants and still remains unsatisfied. Therefore the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare. Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists, not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. (as cited in Parel, 1997, pp. 65–66)

Tagore, in his talk delivered in China in 1924, concurred with this critique of industrialism:

> We have for over a century been dragged by the prosperous West behind its chariot, choked by the dust, deafened by the noise, humbled by our helplessness, and overwhelmed by the speed. We agreed to acknowledge that this chariot race was progress, and that progress was civilization. If we even ventured to ask, 'progress towards what, and progress for whom' it was considered to be peculiarly and ridiculously oriental to entertain such doubts about the absoluteness of progress. Of late, a voice has come to us to take count not only of the scientific perfection of the chariot but the depth of the ditches lying across its path. (Tagore, 1961, p. 124)

In 1928 Gandhi wrote in Young India:

> God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after that manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts. (Gandhi, 1999, Vol. 43, p. 412)

Similarly, in 1931:

> Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. … The future of industrialism is dark… (Gandhi, 1999, Vol. 54, p. 84)

In the 1924 essay titled, "City and Village," Tagore writes metaphorically about the danger of self-indulgence and greed:

> I often imagine that the… [moon's] storehouse was perpetually replenished with food for her children who were already there and who were to come. Then in course of time, some race was born to her, gifted with a furious energy of intelligence, which began greedily to

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Parthiban et al., 2020a, b). There is sharply rising populism, authoritarianism, and fascism around the world, as per the Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Democracy Index. These ecological, socio-economic, political crises are interrelated and reinforce each other.

> devour its surroundings… Their profit-makers created wants which were unnatural… When they had reduced the limited store of material, they waged furious wars among their different sections… They exhausted the water supply, cut down the trees, reduced the surface of the planet into a desert riddled with pits… At last, one day, like a fruit whose pulp has been completely eaten by insects which it sheltered, the moon became a lifeless shell, a universal grave for the voracious creatures who had consumed the world in which they had been born. (Tagore, 1961, p. 314)

Gandhi's vision of a good society was evocatively captured by him in one word – *Swaraj*. S*wa* means self, and *raj* means the rule. Rule over oneself, i.e., learn to overcome the cardinal sins of greed, fear, envy, pride, lust, hatred, and anger. For Gandhi, the notion of violence was not just physical but also included greed, i.e., taking up an "unfair" share of resources. The economics of *Swaraj* rests on principles of limits, values of equity and welfare for all (*Sarvodaya*), localization (*Swadeshi*), and the abolition of private property (Ghatak et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume). He emphasizes community-centric development (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume), aims to balance equity, ecology, and economics (Javeri et al., this volume), and his notion of trusteeship takes social responsibility and sustainability into account (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume).

Both Gandhi and Tagore constantly exhorted their countrymen to work for rural regeneration, and they wrote and worked on various aspects of it throughout their lives. They were strong critics of rampant urbanization and felt that the whole world would not be able to, and also should not, copy the urban-industrial model of the West.

Gandhi wrote against huge machines and factories in Hind Swaraj and refined his critique of megatechnology over the years. He laid out fairly strict criteria for what machinery to support and which to oppose (Prasad, 2001). Much later in the 1970s, E.F Schumacher put these basic principles into a coherent framework in his collection of essays titled, "Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered" (Wood, 1985, p. 247).

Both Gandhi and Tagore were wary of a powerful nation-state, welfare or otherwise. They saw narrow and aggressive nationalism as one of the worst outcomes of industrialism. Tagore wrote and lectured powerfully against this evil and angered his fellow Indians and many people in Japan, the USA, and China, where he gave the lectures (Guha, 2009, pp. vii–xx). Tagore's well-known poem, "Where the Mind is Without Fear," highlights Freedom, Liberty, Reason, Fraternity, and Universalism. Tagore put his weight behind building strong participatory democratic communities and experimented with cooperatives, community grain banks, secular village festivals, rural banks, and village-level arbitration courts. He distinguished between *somaj pradhan desh* (Society-Centric Country) and *rashtro prodhan desh* (State-Centric Country), claiming that India was more suited to the former.

Similarly, Gandhi's idea of democracy sharply contrasts with representative democracy. In August 1946, Gandhi outlined his faith in village republics over strong centralized nation-states. In this quote published in his mouthpiece, *The Harijan*:

> Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbors or from the world. It will be the free and voluntary play of mutual forces. …In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose center will be the individual…, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units. (Parel, 1997, p. 188)

Tagore explicitly talked about interconnectedness with nature, and many of his creative outputs are linked to this vision. He designed many of his new social celebrations and institutions around these ideas. This included his educational experiments at Shantiniketan and Sriniketan, West Bengal, India. For Tagore, a life worth living had to be full of *Ananda* (Bliss). He insisted that *Ananda* was one of the most important indicators of civilization. Life had to be full of color, poetry, music, dance, drama, pattern, and craftsmanship, all linked with material simplicity. And it had to be in harmony with nature. That also ensured that your *Ananda* was not at another's expense. Gandhi mentions happiness as crucial in his Hind Swaraj of 1909 in the chapter "What is true civilization?" (Parel, 1997, p. 66) and delinks happiness from wealth, as Tagore had done.

2 *SWARAJ* Today

The following is our re-interpretation of Gandhi and Tagore's Swaraj for today. We have assimilated and interlinked the various writings of Gandhi and Tagore in the economic, technological, political, social, and spiritual spheres. Readers are encouraged to look at "The Gandhi Notebook" (Sinha & Patil, 2019), where various quotations of Gandhi have been organized chronologically as per these spheres. There is also a comparison between Tagore's Rural Reconstruction Charter of 1906 and Gandhi's Constructive Programme of 1941 (ibid, p. 42).

2.1 *What Would* Swaraj *Look Like in Today's Context?*

Most people will live in small rural and urban communities; work in agriculture and cottage industries and services owned cooperatively. There will be equality of work with respect to status and wages. There will be a high degree of local and regional self-sufficiency, with low amounts of goods being transported over large distances. Science will be harnessed to produce appropriate technologies. Localized economies and technology will enable communities to be politically autonomous and able to take most decisions themselves through face-to-face, participatory, direct

democracy. Centralized nation-states will become largely redundant. Social equity will be pursued, and attempts will be made to actively lessen dominance and discrimination. Everyone will be eco-literate, practice the 4 Rs (reduce-reuse-recycle-regenerate), and live as per the Gandhian dictum, "There is a sufficiency in the world for man's needs, but not for man's greed." The dominant perspective of well-being and success would be rooted in frugal living; a striving for equity and justice (economic, social, and political); a spiritual oneness with nature and the rest of humanity; and a life suffused with happiness *(Ananda*) and creativity.

Today, ideas similar to Swaraj are being explored worldwide. These include Ubuntu from Africa, Buen Vivir and Sumak Kawsey from Latin America, Degrowth and Post Growth from Europe and Australia, Radical Ecological Democracy from India, and Eco-Feminism, Eco-Socialism, and Eco-Anarchism (Kothari et al., 2019). In management and organization studies, many of these ideas, although sometimes not labeled as such, are taking roots: social intermediation (Bhatt et al., 2021; Kistruck et al., 2013a, b; Qiu et al., 2021), social entrepreneurship (Bhatt et al., 2019; Hota et al., 2019, 2023; Qureshi et al., 2016), sharing economy for the marginalized (Bhatt et al., 2021; Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c), inclusive markets and organizations (Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023; Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013b; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018a, b; Sutter et al., 2023), digital social innovation and technofinancing (Qureshi et al., this volume, 2021d, 2022a, b; Parthiban et al., 2021), and responsible consumption (Bansal et al., 2014; Parth et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022).

3 *Nai Talim* (New Education) for Swaraj

In this section, we first detail the original educational experiments of Tagore and Gandhi, then evolve a schema based on their core ideas, and finally discuss the scope of such an education.

3.1 Educational Experiments of Tagore and Gandhi

Both Tagore and Gandhi experimented with alternatives to institutional school education, where "productive work" was the main pedagogic tool for promoting the balanced growth of the 3 Hs: Head, Heart, and Hand. In these schools, the economic, technological, social-political, and spiritual aspects of Swaraj would be integrated. They hoped that such an education would help stem the onrush of industrialism and usher in *Swaraj*. Gandhi optimistically called this new education the "spearhead of a silent social revolution" (Prabhu, 1947, p. 184).

Tagore started his experimental school called Siksha Satra[2] in 1924. As per Bandopadhyay (2001), "the emphasis was on agriculture and a particular craft relevant to life. Learners would be given the freedom to choose a craft, but its products must be of real use at home and should command ready sale outside. Also, Tagore did not forsake his distinct philosophy of education, and his concept of the productive included both utility and creativity" (p. 8).

The crafts included weaving, dying, blanket making, carpentry, bookbinding, leather work, etc. The student's daily routine would devote only 1 hour to learning the three Rs and the rest to gardening, craftwork, and nature study (Bandopadhyay, 2001). As regards the curriculum of Siksha-Satra, there were no textbooks, and subjects of the study would come up as the need arose. Thus, students would learn about the basics of physics and chemistry in the course of knowing the uses of manure, pumps, and other tools. The study of the fertility of the soil relevant to gardening would develop into a study of geology. Students would learn entomology in the process of learning how to control plant diseases and pests. Similarly, the study of birds and plants would introduce the students to ornithology and botany. They would also receive a rudimentary knowledge of geography correlated with their gardening and handicrafts projects. Students were occasionally taken out on excursions, and while visiting a place of interest, they had to draw a map of the place and write a short note on its history. In the process of writing reports and keeping accounts, the students used to have their basic training in literacy and numeracy.

The objective of Siksha-Satra was defined as "to take the problems of the village and the field to the classroom for study, discussion, and experimentation, and to carry the knowledge and experience gained in the classroom and the farm back to the village." The larger objective was to help the students become future leaders so that they might take a leading part in the reconstruction of their home village" (Bandopadhyay, 2001, p. 24).

Tagore appreciated the practical achievements – the clean milk, fresh eggs, and vegetables, the student's craft products, etc. – but he would always remind Elmhirst that the aim was "much greater ends," by which he meant the object to make village life productive and beautiful (Bandopadhyay, 2001, p. 22).

Gandhi visited Siksha Satra in 1925 and was taken in by this experiment. He requested E. R. W. Aryanayakam and Asha Aryanayakam to move to Wardha and start a similar experiment. Gradually, during the 1930s, they helped Gandhi evolve his thoughts on *Nai Talim,* which he then published in his mouthpiece Harijan over a series of articles in 1937. It then led to the National Conference at Wardha on October 22–23, 1937, to discuss *Nai Talim,* also known as Basic Education (Avinashilingam, 1960).

According to us, a one-line definition of *Nai Talim* is *"Education through Productive Work for Swaraj*." The first crucial part of this definition is "Productive

[2] Siksha Satra, located in Sriniketan – a few kms from Tagore's main campus in Shantiniketan, was led by L.K. Elmhirst. Elmhirst was a Britisher who did his PhD at Cornell, met Tagore in 1920 in New York, and came and joined him at Santinketan in 1922. The other leading person with Elmhirst was Santosh Majumdar. The school started on July 1, 1924, in Santosh Majumdar's house.

Work." For Gandhi, this meant making and doing things for immediate use. Members of the Zakir Hussain Committee[3] in 1937–1938, responsible for drafting a *Nai Talim* syllabus, explored the idea of productive work in education from different dimensions: pedagogic, moral, social, and economic (Prakasha, 1985). The committee recommended basic crafts such as (i) spinning and weaving, (ii) carpentry, (iii) (ecological) agriculture, (iv) fruit and vegetable gardening, (v) leatherwork, and (vi) any other craft for which "local and geographical conditions are favorable" (Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1938, p. 21). Apart from these crafts, productive work encompassed social and ecological elements such as village cleaning and sanitation program, organization of student assemblies, practicing conflict resolution methods, budgeting, organizing and cooking school meals, learning about and caring for local ecology in the form of nature walks, observation of local biodiversity (plants, trees, birds, animals, and insects), and examination of local geology (soil, rock, and minerals). So productive work was crafts, social engagement, and studying and caring for nature. This is important to state, as often *Nai Talim*'s productive work is only equated with crafts.

The second part of our *Nai Talim* definition relates to pedagogy. Students would learn age-appropriate basic academic concepts around language, math, social studies, sciences, arts and ecology through productive work. To re-emphasize, the idea was not to do some productive work as a separate activity and continue to teach standard subjects as before using textbooks. The two had to be integrated. In Gandhian parlance, this was called "correlation" (Prakasha, 1985, p. 6).

Gandhi elucidated on this idea in the very first national meeting at Wardha on October 22, 1937, thus:

> What I am going to place before you today is not about a vocation that is going to be imparted alongside education. Now, I wish to say that whatever is taught to children, all of it should be taught necessarily through the medium of a trade or a handicraft. Look at takli (spindle) itself, for instance. The lesson of this takli will be the first lesson of our students through which they would be able to learn a substantial part of the history of cotton, Lancashire and the British empire… How does this takli work? What is its utility? And what are the strengths that lie within it? Thus the child learns all this in the midst of play. Through this he also acquires some knowledge of mathematics. And the beauty is that none of this becomes even a slight burden on his mind… (Gandhi, 1999, Vol. 71, p. 279)

The third and probably the most crucial aspect of *Nai Talim* was its purpose which was "Education – for *Swaraj*." To put this in perspective is John Dewey's quote, "We will know what type of education to provide if we know what type of society we want."

It is worth spelling out what Nai Talim would strive to inculcate through productive work today. It would emphasize a frugal and prosperous life for all; oneness

[3] Zakir Husain, a prominent educationist and Gandhian, was Vice Chancellor of two universities for about 26 years. He was the third President of India from 1967 to 1969. He headed the ten-member committee formed in 1937 to draw up a detailed *Nai Talim* syllabus, of which the convenor was E.W. Aryanayakam, who had previously worked in Tagore's experimental rural school, Siksha Satra.

with nature; understanding of ecological principles; learning and evolving eco-friendly production technologies; cooperation; love and respect for human diversity; elimination of economic and social inequities and injustices; the practice of day-to-day democracy; and participation in local democratic deliberations. It would be about undoing all the damage already done by industrialism. So the choice of productive work and the manner of doing them have to be such that it will promote all of the above. In other words, such an education would promote *Swaraj* and oppose industrialism. We give below the characteristics of productive work in today's context.

3.2 Productive Work in Today's Nai Talim

Nai Talim in contemporary times can be explored through seven different dimensions, as illustrated in Fig. 1. Apart from the themes that Tagore and Gandhi had written and experimented, the authors have explicitly added two points that would characterize the productive work of today and in the future. One is ecological education, which promotes environmental stewardship. And second is the strengthening of grassroots democracy and participatory governance.

We started with the multiple crises of today. Its recognition worldwide is exemplified by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, opening remarks at the recently concluded COP 27, Egypt, in November 2022:

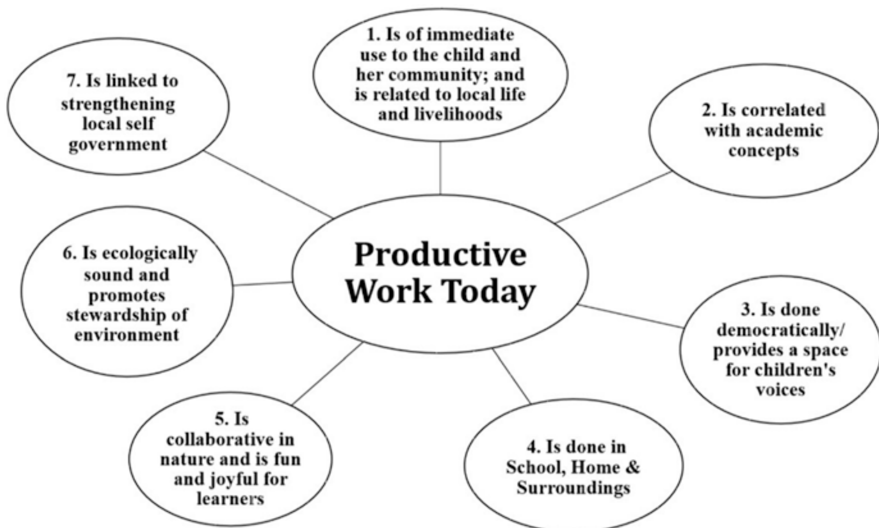

Fig. 1 Productive work schema

> We are in the fight of our lives and we are losing … And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible. We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator. (Harvey & Carrington, 2022)

Today, there are numerous experiments to explore an education that is relevant to an anti-industrialism society, of which we give some examples in the next section.

4 Examples of *Nai Talim* Today

We have picked up examples of productive work in education around five broad themes – food, ecology, democracy, energy, health, and hygiene – to illustrate the different elements in the productive work schema. These themes (though not exhaustive) enable learners to engage practically with a range of societal, ecological, and development issues. We have also included newer possibilities for productive work that can find space in school education. Many of these examples mentioned in this section are based on either personal experience or the insights and scholarship of the authors.[4]

4.1 Food as Productive Work

Gandhi and Tagore themselves experimented with growing food in their schools, and the Zakir Hussain Committee came out with a detailed and graded syllabus to ensure systematic academic linkages with hands-on work around growing food (Hindustani Talimi Sangh, 1938, p. 26). Today, there are a large number of examples of farm-to-school projects, kitchen gardens, school gardens, community gardens, and home gardens.

Three powerful and large-scale examples are from Detroit, Michigan's (USA) urban gardening transformations; Belo Horizonte's (Brazil) drive to end hunger, and the Zapatista movement (Mexico) and its agroecology-based autonomous education. When Detroit's transition to urban gardening started (*YES! Magazine*, 2022), one of the key sites of intervention was school gardens and farm-to-school programs. Children learned how to grow nutritious and culturally appropriate foods,

[4] Second author, Sujit Sinha, co-founded a rural organization called Swarnirva in West Bengal, India. One of its flagship programs between 1997 and 2010 was a youth initiative called the "Kishor Kishori Bahini," or KKB (meaning Male and Female youth force). Young kids and teens (aged 10–16 years) from eight village communities participated in Nai Talim activities outside of school hours in various themes. The first author, Pallavi Varma Patil, coordinated a school farm project called "The Ragi Project" in Bangalore, India, and networked with similar ecological education projects worldwide on account of this. Both authors taught a course on *Nai Talim* for Masters in Development and Masters in Education students at Azim Premji University, Bangalore (2013–2023), and have been curating and writing about relevant examples of *Nai Talim* worldwide.

save seeds, prepare compost and nursery beds, and participate in field visits to farm sites (FoodCorps, n.d.). In fact, so recognized was their farm-to-school program's success in achieving multi-level goals around health, nutrition, well-being, and associated academic achievements that the Michigan Governor announced the month of October 2022 to be an official Farm to School Month (Whitmer, 2022). Similarly, a key aspect of the widely celebrated Belo Horizonte food security program was to ensure a targeted setting up of school gardens. From 60 school and kindergarten gardens in 2008, Belo Horizonte scaled it up to 126 in 2012. "The schools' 96,000 pupils spend an hour a day, on average, caring for plants" (Makri, 2021). The Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico, promote their autonomous place-based education in their milpas (corn fields), among other things. Children learn through the sustainable farming of food. In addition, the organization Schools for Chiapas runs a seed bank under a project called the Mother Seeds Project (Schools for Chiapas, 2014), where children and teachers share the know-how around saving seeds. Given their own struggle and history around corn, the school and corn fields become sites for active learning and critical pedagogy (Keller, 2019).

Supporting organizations provide grants, offer pieces of training and workshops, provide material support (such as seeds and saplings), and even advocate and amplify the cause and benefits of school gardens with education boards. "One Seed Forward" is one such community organization in Scotland that works with the Scottish Educational Board to set up school vegetable gardens in areas of multiple deprivations in Aberdeen City (Gray et al., 2019). The Victorian School Gardens Program in Australia is another example of a program that supports a school community in outdoor learning through school gardens (Victorian Schools Gardens Program, n.d.). Apart from these three large-scale examples, there is a thriving ecosystem around nurturing school gardens in very many communities across the globe.

There are other food-growing initiatives that are outside of the school setup but provide the same educational and pedagogical resources as school gardens. For example, an urban vegetable garden plot in Utrecht, The Netherlands, hosts students, teachers, and volunteer parent groups from primary schools in their neighborhood on a weekly basis. "During these visits, the children learn how to plant seeds, get rid of weeds, properly irrigate their crops, and their favorite part: how to harvest their own produce" (Sustainable Urban Delta, 2021).

Another initiative enables homeschoolers and families to set up their own localized school gardens, such as the Hawaii-based Home Garden Network. Here, a network of 3–4 families is formed, and they take turns helping each other garden. Seeds and produce are shared within the network, and children get an opportunity to get involved in these spaces (Home Garden Network, n.d.). Garden maintenance meetings and training sessions on gardening, food, nutrition, and wellness are regularly held by the University of Hawaii specialists.

In India, within school spaces, there are many examples of learning through growing food, such as The Ragi Project (Patil & Ravi, 2021) in Bangalore, the Edible School Garden in Chennai, or Marudam in Tamil Nadu (Tekguc, 2015), to name a few.

4.2 Ecology as Productive Work

Hands-on conservation of natural resources is another theme that lends itself to *Nai Talim* because of its interdisciplinarity, links with local government agencies, and ecological relevance. The Billion Oyster Project in New York is a wonderful example of such an education. In school, students learn science, conservation, biodiversity, and local ecology by actively restoring oysters at 15 reef sites of New York Harbour. The aim of the initiative is to improve water quality, strengthen the marine ecosystem, and prevent storm damage and erosion along the shorelines. At the same time, this project engages students to learn vital information about maintaining a rich, biodiverse estuary. The project started in one school in 2008, The Urban Assembly New York Harbor School, and has now expanded to other public schools, involving not just the students but a larger community. Over 6000 students, citizen scientists, local government departments, and community organizations working on sustainability issues have come together to restore one billion live oysters to New York Harbour by 2035, hence the name (The Billion Oysters Project, n.d.). The schools design internships and use the space provided by their career and technical education program to allow students to participate in many ways – design and build oyster reef structures, operate and maintain vessels, grow oysters, and conduct research projects at these sites (Makri, 2021). Murray Fisher and Pete Malinowski, the two teachers who initiated the project, believe that "when students are given real responsibility, like helping to restore a degraded New York Harbor, they rise to the occasion with great enthusiasm" (The Billion Oyster Project, n.d.).

Another such project of ecological restoration is the Ocean Blue project in Oregon, piloted in 2021. It introduced the idea of "Blue Schools," promoting community clean-ups of water bodies and designing sustainability-based school curriculum around their beaches, streams, rivers, and oceans. Through Blue Schools, students discover the importance of their local watershed, learn about the pollutants that can contaminate local drinking water, and make a holistic connection between their own environment and the long-term health of the local water supply, wildlife, and our one-world ocean. It is developed in collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association.

In Western Australia, a primary school called South Padbury Primary School has planted its first tiny forest, following the Miyawaki planting method developed in Japan. Grades 3–6 children are involved in learning and doing towards the purpose of rehabilitating degraded areas and increasing biodiversity in urban areas. The children plan to conduct monthly monitoring of the forests and assess plant growth rates, animal diversity, and temperature regimes within and outside the forest (Murdoch University, 2021).

Like in the theme of food, there is an ecosystem promoting such school education in the space of environmental education too. There are community organizations and government departments that support the projects that focus on learning by doing. For example, the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) Ahmedabad, plays such a role in India. It started in 1985 and is affiliated with the Ministry of

Forest and Environment, Government of India, ensuring the scalability and legitimacy of its practical, hands-on environmental education programs through school-level eco clubs. It is networked with 200,000 schools all over India through its regional centers (Centre for Environment Education, n.d.). The National Children's Science Congress, India, started in 1993 by the National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC), Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, is another such initiative. It organizes district, state, and national-level competitions where schoolchildren do practical projects on a particular ecological theme each year, such as biodiversity, land resources, energy, weather, climate, etc. (India Science, Technology, and Innovation, Government of India, n.d.).

Another example of an innovative project focused on productive work around ecological themes is that of the West Bengal (India)-based organization, Development Research and Communications Services Centre (DRCSC), called Ecology and Natural Resource Education (ENRE). It ran for a decade, starting in the late 1990s, in government and private schools and outside school eco-clubs and groups like the KKB mentioned earlier. Under ENRE, children observed and collected data. They then analyzed the data for their own collective understanding, displayed it for parent groups, and sometimes even offered it to the local government. In some cases, it was followed by a practical activity beneficial to their community, such as planting native trees or desilting a village pond. The ENRE theme-based work is now offered as learning material to other environmental educators in the form of booklets around water, waste, fuel, soil, birds, insects, fish, rice, vegetables, trees, herbs, and the local market (Development Research Communication and Services Centre, n.d.).

4.3 Democracy as Productive Work

Most movements for alternatives to industrialism today are trying to evolve newer forms of face-to-face, direct, and deepening democracy at community levels. Zapatista movement in Mexico, Rojava in Northern Syria, and Korchi *Mahagramsabha* (Mega Village Assembly) in Maharashtra, India (Kothari, 2022) are some examples.

How can children from a very young age learn, strongly internalize, and practice this nature of direct democracy? The "Democratic schools" movement provides us with ideas in this regard. The first modern school, Summerhill, started in the 1920s (Neill, 1960) and has been running as per its basic principles for a century. The other well-documented school near Boston, USA, is Sudbury Farm School, which started in the mid-1960s. Today, the numbers are not very large, but democratic schools are spread across at least 30 countries and all continents, including India and Australia. These are places where children from a very young age learn to be responsible for their own learning, general well-being, and, more importantly, for the learning and well-being of their whole school community. The children learn to argue their own positions as well as listen respectfully to others' points of view from a very young age (Greenberg, 1995).

Providing children with decision-making responsibilities as well as taking on the productive work of caring for and maintaining schools has been standard practice in Gandhian *Nai Talim* schools. Even now, in some remaining *Nai Talim* schools, the practice of "Ministers" or subject committees with specific responsibilities in each class or for the whole school can be seen (Lakshmi Ashrams, 2015). The four experimental primary schools run by Swarnirvar in West Bengal, India, also formed children's committees. Their tasks would range from school cleaning, library, games, food, discipline, drinking water, and running a school magazine. The membership of these committees was rotated every 6 months. On one Saturday of the month, each committee had to present their work to the whole school, where anybody could ask questions and make critical comments. In the Zapatista community young adults above the age of 12 have a voice in their village government by participating in their community meetings.

An exciting example in this regard, where young adults participate in decision-making about their communities and schools, and that too collaboratively, is the Urban Participatory Budgeting experiment. In Chicago, school-going children propose, vote on, and select projects using part of the municipal budget, and this has resulted in preparing them through hands-on, fun, and joyful ways for a democratic future. Chicago schoolchildren have in the past succeeded in bagging projects that include streetlights, parks, laptop availability, and mural art on walls for their neighborhoods (Great Cities Institute, 2021). Similarly, in Paris, schools are increasingly involved through participatory budgeting to give them a voice on how their school needs should be met. 83% of the Parisian schools participated (IOPD, 2016), where children chose a project for their school financed by the municipal budget.

4.4 Energy as Productive Work

Industrialism started with and is powered by fossil fuels. However, this is proving unsustainable, and fossil fuel-free futures are being discussed at forums like Davos (Breene, 2016). What role can schools play today to usher in a lot of alternatives, such as decentralized renewable energy and learning to use energy frugally and efficiently side by side?

In 2006, a research and advocacy organization called the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, India, started the "Green Schools Programme" (CSE, n.d.). Amongst other activities, it helped school students audit their use of resources, map their consumption and wastage, and promote suitable actions to improve energy use by schoolchildren. The exercise involves collecting information under the following headings: air, energy, food, land, water, and waste. Students learn to count, weigh, measure, explore, and analyze, and today it covers over a thousand schools in almost all states of India (Ibid.)

In an experimental school called Adharshila in the Badwani district of Madhya Pradesh, India, an external resource person and students together built a biodigester plant. The residential school had a small dairy with cows and vegetable farming.

After that, the students ran the plant themselves (Cassilas, 2013). The simple technology, based on low costs and local material inputs, became a part of the school curriculum that year.

Similarly, pedal power, or bicycle-based electricity generation, is another low-cost, simple technology that generates energy. It is fast becoming a popular, innovative way to power new-generation events such as concerts, shows, and gatherings of many types (Renewable Energy Innovation, n.d.). A California-based group called "Rock the Bike" works directly with high schools and universities in the Bay Area through demonstrations of pedal power use, such as a bike blender for smoothies, powering school assemblies by pedal power, or a school dance performance, even encouraging children to learn in a fun way about alternative pedal-powered energy (Rock the Bike, n.d.). But it is also a hands-on project for learning academic concepts. An Arizona-based project called "Wind for Schools" works in schools and colleges to teach students the basics of energy and mechanical, engineering, and electrical principles. Students design and construct bicycle generators either in their science classes or with their science clubs and hold fun demonstrations to increase students' understanding and awareness of energy topics (Northern Arizona University, n.d.).

4.5 Health and Hygiene as Productive Work

Simple, inexpensive, and creative curricula can be designed on the theme of health and hygiene to increase children's knowledge about their health, where teachers and children both engage in the necessary skills for prevention, timely diagnosis, and treatment. Here we do not have many actual examples, but we illustrate a few possibilities where such an education can vastly improve the health of children and their communities, with a focus on India. For example, malnutrition remains one of the biggest problems in India. Measuring undernourishment is easy and involves measuring heights, lengths, and weights and comparing them with standard tables. Children in primary school classes 4 and 5 with basic knowledge of multiplication and division can be used to calculate these figures regularly for all children in classes 1–5. This data can then be discussed in the class, with parents, with local government departments, and with health workers for appropriate action. There could be similar actions with other forms of malnutrition like iron and vitamin deficiencies in which older grade children can be involved. Similarly, children recording diseases of all school student's families and then analyzing that data would be a useful exercise for understanding, taking prompt action, or appropriate long-term action as necessary.

Practical first aid training is already done in many schools in India. It can be done better by involving the children themselves. It was found that Kishore Kishori Bahini (KKB) youths (see footnote 3) could then take care of small injuries, sprains,

cuts, small burns, insect bites, and drowning victims (Sinha, 2020). Given that diarrhea is a common occurrence in India, KKB youths were trained to make oral rehydration solutions, which have been found to be very effective. Herbs and other traditional treatments are dying in many places, along with the knowledge they contain. KKB was trained to use traditional herbal remedies for some five to six common diseases and, after experimenting for a year, KKB were found to gain a lot of confidence regarding its effectiveness and limitations (Swarnirvar, 2004).

In many areas of the world, malaria and dengue caused by mosquitoes are huge problems. Practical work related to preventing the breeding of mosquitoes as much as possible, using treated mosquito nets, using effective local lotions, and learning to do a blood test on patients can be a part of the middle school to high school curriculum.

There are many waterborne diseases. In many parts of India, arsenic and fluoride are also problems, and there are simple tests available that school students can learn and do regularly. Some useful, practical work involves testing water, making and using simple filters, disinfecting major water sources, and using methods like SODIS (Solar water disinfection). Many school students who try these ideas are encouraged through funding and awards from various environmental organizations in India. One example is the Earthian Sustainability Education Program for schools and colleges run by the Wipro Foundation in India (Shasa & Sreedharan, 2015).

The other productive work in schools under this theme is raising awareness for ecological sanitation, recycling human waste, and teaching skills to construct inexpensive ecological toilets.

In Zimbabwe's Chisungu primary school, Harare, for example, children, under the supervision of teachers, constructed five designs of ecological toilets and inexpensive handwashing devices. Urine was collected and used to water maize and other plants on demonstration plots. Children not only learned practical skills about improving their sanitation but also about soil health by making and applying compost. Children grew local, nutritious foods and herbs in school gardens, including fruit trees around compost pits. In this way, they received multiple benefits around personal hygiene, health, nutrition, biodiversity, and ecology (Morgan & Shangwa, 2010).

Waste management is another crucial activity where children can play an important role as change agents, not only through their behavioral change towards reducing, recycling, and preventing pollution of water sources but also in influencing their families. Learning spaces can integrate various methods to care for solid and liquid waste, including disaggregation, composting, reuse, and recycling. Trashonomics is one such example of a curriculum that waste management activists have designed to encourage schoolchildren in India to participate in doable hands-on activities (Business Standard, 2019). UN-Habitat also has a program to promote educational projects for waste literacy at schools and higher education levels (UN Habitat, 2020).

5 Some Comments, Limitations, and Reasons for Hope

Broadly speaking, doing productive work as an integral part of the school curriculum has always been difficult, although not impossible. Even during the heydays of experimentation with *Nai Talim* in India between 1940 and 1960, learning language, math, science, social studies, etc. through productive work was not easy. It required innovative teachers, and creative curriculum, and support from the administration (Prakasha, 1985). Nonetheless, we saw in Sect. 3.1 that it was attempted in Tagore's Siksha Satra and many *Nai Talim* schools (Prakasha, 1985, pp. 41–50). However, ideas around experiential, hands-on pedagogy survived and even flourished through the practices of alternative schools in India (Vittachi et al., 2007). The original *Nai Talim* school, Ananda Niketan, in Sevagram (near Wardha, Maharashtra, India), nurtured by Gandhi's close associates and which had closed down in the 1970s, was revived in 2004. It is currently, according to us, one of the best examples in India of a school structured to incorporate productive work into the school curriculum with a strong focus on correlation (Anand Niketan, 2015).

There is no denying that going into the future, a significant amount of innovative work is required to accomplish meaningful and interesting correlations that would also break the division between work and knowledge – a persistent issue that has plagued *Nai Talim* (Kumar, 1993). The increasingly visible environmental crisis from the 1970s, leading to the galloping climate emergency in the last 15–20 years, has spurred significant environmental education efforts worldwide. We have given a few examples in Sect. 4.2 above. Different stakeholders at all levels, such as the UN agencies, national school boards, specialized state-supported agencies, and members of civil society, especially environmental organizations, are taking concerted action. Many promote competitions and prizes for actionable environmental projects. This is certainly a welcome step. However, there are limitations. Firstly, in any school, these projects are done by a few students with one or two teachers as guides. Secondly, these are special projects and do not form part of the main curriculum; therefore, education goes on separately in the classrooms instead of education through these projects. Thirdly, the award-winning projects are, in many instances, not easily accessible to outsiders who would like to learn and do similar things. To come back to the key question of the purpose, are all these efforts linked to taking steps toward *Swaraj*? According to us, most people and nation-states are still under the grip of industrialism and fixated on "material growth" (never mind the word "green"). Therefore, state and most private school education still cater to individual socio-economic ladder-climbing aspirations. For example, despite having an environmental studies curriculum, a dedicated course on the theme, and even nature clubs that encourages actionable projects, the remaining school structure including timetables, assessments, pedagogy, success criteria, and certification continue to be embedded in the ideology of industrialism. So most productive work experiments are piecemeal and skeletal, without much popular support. They will not satisfy all of the criteria of the ideal Productive Work Schema given in Sect. 3.2.

One of the most advanced examples that matches our schema is that of the Zapatista movement. This movement, which encompasses several thousand rural indigenous communities and over 30 small towns of the Chiapas province in Mexico, has explicitly rejected industrialism and also the Mexican nation-state. Their vision of a "Good Society" is quite aligned with *Swaraj*. They have set up their own school system and evolved their own curriculum, pedagogy, training of teachers, timetables, and assessments.

The Zapatista movement started in 1994 and went through many turmoils. Their own schools started taking shape in the late 1990s and went through a phase of experimentation. It is interesting to note that these were assisted by radical volunteers from other countries (Montes, 2019. p. 108) as within the Zapatista people such expertise and experience were initially missing. In the next 20 years, these educational experiments proceeded along with the experiments in all their other spheres. In other words, the quest for their "Good Society" and experiments with an appropriate school education happened side by side, reinforcing each other.

We know of movements and initiatives of various sizes, from a single rural community like Mendha Lekha Village, Maharashtra (Pathak Broome, 2018) to about a hundred communities in India like the *Korchi Maha Gramsabha* (Pathak Broome et al., 2022), which are trying to experiment with the social, economic, technological, political spheres of *Swaraj*. But they are worried that their children will continue to receive an education that does not offer the skills and values to opt out of industrialism. Like the Zapatistas, there are no experienced people within these communities to try to evolve an appropriate *Nai Talim* school-level education.

However, the hopeful thing is that, as outlined in Sect. 4, a significant amount of content, methods, materials, lesson plans, and expertise have been developed by various actors in different contexts around the world. All it needs is an innovative partnership between these educators and the communities that are part of the movements toward Swaraj.

This is our hope for a post-COVID world from the perspective of Gandhi and Tagore.

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Part II
Case Studies: Relevance of Gandhian Thoughts to Social Entrepreneurship

Sarvodaya to Nurture Peace Communities: A Case Study of ASSEFA

Loganathan Kumar, Vinay Pillai, and Israr Qureshi

1 Introduction

The recurring crisis in capitalism and its failure to address rising inequality and create sustainable and vibrant communities (Bhatt, 2017) have prompted scholars and practitioners to look for alternative economies (Bhatt et al., this volume-a; Dinerstein, 2015; Holloway, 2017). Many see Gandhian philosophy as an alternative to redressing the failures of capitalism by placing social and environmental concerns at the center of economics (Balakrishnan et al., 2017; Bhatt et al., 2013; Chakrabarty, 2015; Roy, this volume; Patil & Sinha, this volume; Vidaković, 2022; Wang et al., 2022). It is argued that the Gandhian principles of Sarvodaya and trusteeship and related concepts of commoning and technoficing (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Bhatt et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., this volume, 2021d, 2023) have the potential to challenge two fundamental problems of the current economic system (i.e., inequality and exploitation of nature) by redefining economic activities (Bhatt et al., 2013; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume; Mishra & Shukla, this volume).

Capitalism defines economic activities in terms of fulfilling the material needs of society through an "efficient" market system that "optimizes" resources to meet the unlimited material needs of society (Laville, 2010; North, 1977; Coraggio, 2009).

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Individuals interacting in the market system are presumed to be utility maximizers, indifferent to others, and severely competitive (Kotz, 2009). Since capital accumulation and profit maximization are the main driving forces of the economy, all other sectors that are not commercially competitive or do not have monetary value are excluded from the economic activities (Johanisova et al., 2013; Qureshi et al., 2021a). Relatedly, it establishes a primacy of exchange values of commodities over their use value (Coraggio, 2009; Pillai et al., 2021a, b), and only those activities that have monetary value form an integral part of the economy, while the social and environmental costs of producing goods are not included in the exchange value of commodities. Evidence shows how this narrow understanding of economics has been detrimental to social and environmental progress. For example, the principle of private property and less government intervention, while arguably leading to economic prosperity, innovation, and efficiency, has resulted in depleting resources and increasing pollution (Bansal et al., 2014; Solanki, this volume). Markets reward those who already have productive assets: financial assets, land and other physical assets, and human capital (Birdsall, 2004). Thus, the system exacerbates social inequalities, leaving a majority of people in poverty.

The Gandhian philosophy challenges the core assumptions of capitalism. It is rooted in alternative principles (non-possession, non-violence, and trusteeship) and provides support for a *commons paradigm* (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Peredo et al., 2018; Meyer, 2020). It values solidarity and sustainability over profit maximization and advocates community to be at the center of creating, managing, and sustaining commons. Interestingly, scholars exploring self-reliant communities have mainly focused on indigenous communities and their traditions of caring for the land and its environment (Dinerstein, 2015; Dombroski et al., 2019). There are fewer examples of how such a process of building self-reliant communities and commons takes place in heterogeneous and hierarchical communities.

In this chapter, we trace the journey of the Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA) to show the challenges and processes of building self-reliance in heterogenous and hierarchical communities. ASSEFA is a leading Gandhian social organization in India that is well known for its pioneering work in the Bhoodan (land gift) and Gramdan Movements. Embedded in the Gandhian principle of Trusteeship, ASSEFA's leadership in these movements provides critical insights on creating and managing land as shared resources for the common good.

With its five decades of actively working in the development sector, ASSEFA is considered the bellwether among social organizations in India. It was also instrumental in incubating several other social organizations, notably PRADAN, BASIX, Deepalaya, Srijan, and Dhan Foundation (ASSEFA, 2018). Furthermore, epitomizing the Gandhian principle of village Self-reliance, ASSEFA's engagement with creating self-reliant communities in over eight states across India provides insights into alternative organizing.

This chapter is organized into the following sections: In the first section, we situate ASSEFA's work within the broad philosophical framework of Sarvodaya. We then trace its evolution as a social intermediary by examining five different phases of its development trajectory. We demonstrate how ASSEFA's approach of trial and

error (cf. "muddling through," Lindblom, 1959), its long-term orientation, and its focus on need-based solutions have enabled it to prefigure self-reliant communities (Bhatt, 2022; Bhatt et al., this volume-a).

2 Sarvodaya: The Philosophical Underpinnings of ASSEFA

Sarvodaya, meaning "welfare of all," is a central concept in Gandhi's philosophy (Gandhi, 1951; see also Bokare, 1985; Devadoss, 1974). Its ideal is to transform society holistically. It envisions a more equitable socio-economic future where everyone's basic needs are met, and it is achievable through various constructive programs, creative imagination, shattering the status quo, experimentation, and undying hope for the future (Kantowsky, 1980; Pandey, 1988; Varma, 1959). Sarvodaya's appeal is its ability to motivate people to actively strive for change and improve the status quo, making it, at least seemingly, a realistic and achievable process (Agarwal, 1951; Basu, 1984; Bilpodiwala, 1961; Doctor, 1967; Narayan, 1964). Gandhi believed in equality and ethical behavior and sought to create them among all people, beginning with the last and least in society and moving toward upliftment for all (Mallac, 1987; Sinha, 1978). Gandhi's objective of Sarvodaya cannot be seen in isolation from other Gandhian principles, as it sums up his ideal and praxis of creating a just and equitable society (Bokare, 1985; Devadoss, 1974; see Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Gandhi, 1951, see also Bilpodiwala, 1961). His principles, ideal, and conceptualization of Sarvodaya led to Bhoodan and Gramdan, which represent the core concepts used in this chapter.

2.1 Sarvodaya Through Bhoodan

The Bhoodan movement was a voluntary land-gift movement aimed at redistributing land from landowners who had excess land to the landless without any coercion or force (Bhave, 1957a). It was developed by Vinoba Bhave, who believed that it was a necessary step in achieving a just and equitable society where land was seen as a key resource for economic and social development. Bhoodan aimed to address the issues of landlessness and empower the landless, promoting cooperation, mutual respect, and social responsibility, which were central to the Sarvodaya movement (Oommen, 1972). The concept of Bhoodan, which involves individual land donations that are accumulated and redistributed to the landless, evolved into the more radical idea of Gramdan, where the whole or a major part of a village is donated by at least 70% of its villagers, thereby abolishing individual ownership of land altogether (Linton, 1971; Sen, 1964).

The movement of Gramdan has three stages for the development of a village, which involve acquiring land for the village assembly, legally transferring land titles to the assembly, and proceeding with social reconstruction under the guidance of

the Gram Sabha (Mukherji, 1966). In Gramdan, the land becomes community owned through the process of commoning, giving the village control over its own economy and polity with the objective of making the village one family (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume). Gramdan was introduced as the basis for establishing village autonomy but proved harder to promote than Bhoodan (See Linton, 1971, for a critique).

The Bhoodan-Gramdan movement expanded on Gandhi's earlier constructive program and aimed to establish self-sufficient and thriving villages where everyone's basic needs were fulfilled and there was a sense of social and economic equality (Bhave, 1957b). The Bhoodan movement represented a practical application of Sarvodaya principles in India and, at least to some extent, provided confidence that Sarvodaya was an achievable ideal, capable of transforming Indian society. While the movement was criticized at many levels (Mahajan, 2020; Sherman, 2016), it still remains among the largest such movements post the Gandhian period in the constructive work movement. And arguably more land has been distributed to the marginalized and landless in the Bhoodan period than in the entire history of the Indian sub-continent (Narayan, 1969). The state also supported the initiative in a significant manner. The various state governments across the country brought out supportive legislation to ease the land gifting process. Taxation benefits were also provided in the form of stamp duty exemption and land revenue tax. In the following section, we explain the complexity and challenges of implementing Bhoodan and how ASSEFA navigated those challenges and evolved over the period of time.

3 ASSEFA: Origin and Historical Context

ASSEFA, a Sarvodaya organization, was started as an offshoot of the Bhoodan movement. ASSEFA was founded in 1969 by Sri. S. Loganathan, a Sarvodaya worker, and Professor Giovanni Ermiglia in Tamil Nadu. The initial mission was to develop the land collected under the Bhoodan movement and settle the poor and landless farmers. However, the donated land was largely barren and needed substantial investment. Additionally, the landless beneficiaries of the Bhoodan also lacked capital and inputs such as tools or animals to start farming. To develop the land, several Gandhian leaders came together to start a land development project in a small village in Tamil Nadu. This project was launched as a Sarva Seva Farms project in 1969 and laid the foundation for the origin of the Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA).

Since then, ASSEFA has expanded its operations to other areas in Tamil Nadu as well as other states in India, such as Maharashtra, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Simultaneously, it also changed the approach from working exclusively on land development to village-centric development. In the next paragraphs, we trace the journey of ASSEFA and explain in detail the challenges in each phase and how those challenges were navigated.

3.1 First Phase: Developing Skills and Capabilities Through Direct and Immediate Actions

Inequality in land ownership is one of the biggest contributors to social inequality (UN, 2013). As noted above, the Bhoodan movement was inspired by the Gandhian ideal of trusteeship to challenge unequal land possession and to build a just and equitable society. In the theory of Trusteeship, Gandhi saw it as the moral obligation of the property owners to behave as "trustees" of their property to advance social good. On various occasions, he argued that land and all property belong to those who work for it (Gandhi, 1947). However, instead of forced confiscation of land from the land owners, Gandhi believed in "non-violence" and persuaded land owners to voluntarily renounce their land by becoming "trustees." The Bhoodan movement aspired to create social equality by enacting the principles of trusteeship in practice. However, it faced several challenges in its implementation. Notably, the quality of the donated land was not good and required capital investment, expertise, technical support, and input such as bullocks, implements, seeds, and fertilizers to make these lands productive. ASSEFA implemented various programs to improve the quality of land and to provide support to the most marginalized.

ASSEFA, under the leadership of Loganathan and Giovanni Ermiglia, started the first Sarva Seva Farm at Sevalur in the then Ramnad district of Tamil Nadu to develop the donated land. It involved various constructive programs that leveraged the assets and skills available in the communities and collectivized them through community mobilization and group formation. As described by Loganathan:[1]

> I asked the allottees' families to give me one youth from their family and then we created this land army. We stayed in the villages itself. In the evening, we will go to the nearby villages, we did drama and other things. Next day we collect rice and other things…in such a way we did it…and then these boys went ahead and did the first village and then the second….it was people to people or youth to youth.

ASSEFA also collaborated with government agencies and external funding agencies. For example, Bhoodan cooperatives were formed to distribute loans from the government. Similarly, various need-based support programs, such as wells for irrigation, adult literacy schools, and recreational activities, were started with a specific purpose of land development. As this program became successful in Tamil Nadu, the ASSEFA team replicated the success in other states, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Karnataka, covering 9844 acres, benefiting 3597 Bhoodan families. However, this scaling up through replication also required an expansion in organizations' internal capabilities to manage resources and day-to-day affairs more professionally (André & Pache, 2016; Bhatt et al., 2021). Mobilizing the right human resources is a challenging yet important task for a social intermediary to carry out its mission (Battilana et al., 2015; Doherty et al., 2014). Loganathan faced a similar challenge in recruiting the right professional. On the one hand, the

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fxA0VnfOhTA

staff should be driven by the best practices of commercial enterprises (such as efficiency, scale, and innovation) (Kistruck et al., 2013a, b); on the other, they should be aligned with the Gandhian philosophy of self-reliance and trusteeship and must be passionate about improving the lives of the most marginalized (Javeri et al., this volume; Moolakkattu, this volume).

After an initial search, Loganathan was able to successfully rope in several professionals who were inspired by Gandhian philosophy and had a passion to work for rural development. Vijay Mahajan from the Indian Institute of Management at Ahmedabad, Deep Joshi from MIT, and T. K. Matthew, a staunch Gandhian with a degree in Agriculture studies and over two decades of experience in the field, were all brought in to take over the reins of ASSEFA in other regions.

As described above, the intervention at this phase was limited to the more immediate requirements of making the Bhoodan land habitable and creating a basic livelihood solution for its inhabitants. Some of the programs implemented during this time include land leveling and reclamation with irrigation facilities. This was supplemented by agriculture programs that were capital-oriented projects such as building check dams and wells. Thus, making the most of what could be undertaken given the resource constraints in the context of the marginalized.

3.2 The Second Phase: Proactive Long-Term Engagement for Village-Centric Development

Direct and immediate actions are helpful in meeting the urgent needs of the resource-constrained communities (Bhatt et al., 2019; Hota et al., 2019). However, a long-term orientation and holistic livelihood strategy are required to achieve a just and equitable society, or Gram Swaraj (self-government) (Sutter et al., 2023). Such long-term orientation means building institutions and processes that are based on participatory decision-making and aim to create a just society (Bhatt, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a).

The second phase in the evolution of ASSEFA moved away from a land development model towards a more village-centric participatory model. ASSEFA's tryst with Gramdan could be considered a pragmatic approach to overcoming resource constraints while implementing its development strategies. As noted in the first phase, the land that was allotted under Bhoodan was largely wasteland. During its cultivation, ASSEFA realized the benefits of pooling resources and creating self-reliant villages that promote peace and harmony. The practice of Gramdan developed by Vinobha Bhave was particularly relevant for creating the Sarvodaya order or society. According to Bhave, villages where land is not a private property but a common resource will be harmonious despite the differences in caste, creed, cuisine, culture, and class (Bhave, 1957c). In such villages, the rich will hold no contempt for the poor, and the poor will have no hatred toward the rich. He used the analogy of how differences that may still arise in such a context will be like the five

fingers of the hand, all different yet necessary with a consequential role in ensuring that everyone grows and equity is maintained (Bhave, 1957c; Dickson, 1968). However, evidence suggests that a feeling of belonging and harmony was not echoed by all sections of the community that participated in the Gramdan process, as the benefits were shared differently. Often, the landless beneficiaries of Bhoodan tended to have better social and economic outcomes compared to those who donated the land (Mukherji, 1974). Incidentally, the definition of Gramdan itself has evolved over the period to a more fluid version with no mandate for a 100% donation of land but with extra provisions for a governing body such as the Gram Sabha and conflict resolution mechanisms (Mahajan, 2020).

These conversations shaped ASSEFA's second phase and inspired it to take a broad village-centric approach compared to narrow land-based livelihood interventions (ASSEFA, 2005, 2019; Dhadda, 1957). ASSEFA also embraced the changing nature of Gramdan, even if partly. For example, Bhave believed that any village that has donated all of its lands for the common good is ready to implement participatory mechanisms almost immediately (Bhave, 1957c). ASSEFA launched this concept in a few villages in the Natham Block of Tamil Nadu, where Gram Sabhas (village assemblies) were established to design and implement various community-centric livelihood projects. These Gram-Sabhas remain the cornerstone of the efforts to build self-reliant communities through deliberative processes, create networks with external intermediaries, and resolve conflict among the village members. They also acted as the chief negotiators between the members of the community and the government and other organizations. This solidified ASSEFA's approach to a participatory and village-centric model for its future efforts. Eventually, demonstrating its alignment with the government, it had to encourage the communities to merge with the state-mandated Gram Sabhas to avoid duplication of operations and responsibilities.

As the above discussion shows, Gramdan was only one of the approaches to building self-reliant, participatory communities. The other two approaches used by ASSEFA were participatory mechanisms and a need-based approach to social intermediation. The need-based livelihood solutions aimed to improve the cultural status and socioeconomic background of the marginalized groups and to enhance the self-management capacity of individuals and the community. It was among the first step toward building self-reliant communities. ASSEFA also launched various constructive programs to address the rising material aspirations as well as the social-ecological concerns. Some of these programs are discussed below:

Agro-based interventions: The programs formed the backbone of ASSEFA's rural development initiatives. As the work was carried out in an extremely resource-constrained environment with extreme poverty and inequality, ASSEFA designed programs specifically to improve the net income of the farmers. With grant funding, ASSEFA provided comprehensive support in the form of finances and technical expertise for infrastructure development. A participatory approach to watershed development and irrigation facilities through check dams, lift

irrigation, and wells was also undertaken, and direct linkages were created to source quality agricultural input and also to exchange surplus produce.

Educational interventions: It included setting up schools at all levels, including technical education. ASSEFA considered education as a prerequisite to attain sustainable and quality livelihoods. For this purpose, community-managed schools were established in peripheral villages where such facilities were absent. Born out of the Sarvodaya social order, supplementary education mechanisms were also formed to ensure equity in capacity-building programs. Currently, there are around 600 schools across the Indian states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu under ASSEFA education programs, educating around 32,000 children. Approximately, 48% of these students are girls.

Health-based interventions: These interventions aim to build a healthy and harmonious community. The programs prioritize the health of the most marginalized groups, such as women and children. Some of these interventions include access to reproductive health services, immunization measures, nutrition, and conducting awareness campaigns on health and sanitation. Given the lack of health infrastructure in these villages, there is also a deliberate focus on preventive medicine.

Community marriages: They are organized to promote harmony and inter-group amity among the inhabitants of an area. Several religious denominations participate in this endeavor. According to Loganathan, community marriages result in many positive social and economic benefits, including a decrease in domestic and communal violence. These events are fully organized by women from the villages, and the wedding expenses are fully covered.

3.3 The Third Phase: Assembling an Ecosystem for Sustainability

An exit strategy for a social intermediary is important (Kistruck et al., 2013a, b). Since these intermediaries are not driven by profit and economies of scale and, in some cases, are inspired by the Gandhian ideal of Sarvodaya (Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume; Mishra & Shukla, this volume), an exit strategy provides them with more avenues to achieve their social mission and replicate their programs in other areas (Ghosh, this volume). The third phase of ASSEFA involved developing this exit strategy by ensuring the sustainability of their programs (ASSEFA, 2005, 2019). A key question at this stage was how to ensure the social sustainability of its programs, even after the organization exited from the community. Prior research suggests that developing inclusive social ties (cross-cutting ties among people from different socio-economic statuses) is important for the social sustainability of development programs (Bhatt, 2017; Pillai et al., 2021a, b).

ASSEFA reflected this approach by not only creating livelihood programs that address the economic needs of the community but also implementing programs that build community spirit and the self-esteem of its members. Creating mutual interdependencies[2] through community institutions and supplementing them with social programs such as community marriages, education, and health awareness was critical for this endeavor (ASSEFA, 2016). Next, we discuss some of the important initiatives that help the organization in its goal of sustainability while adhering to the Sarvodaya principle of Gandhi.

With over 163 organizations in the ecosystem, ASSEFA has developed a comprehensive system that involved multiple constructive programs (Bhatt et al., 2023).

This ecosystem helps ASSEFA in moving towards Sarvodaya by taking various measures, such as creating a pool of shared resources, fostering women leadership at multiple levels, mitigating social issues, and, in some cases, even altering government policies to facilitate community-driven development. Relatedly, it also formed numerous community-owned and operated corporations, trusts, and federations at village and block levels.

Women-Led SHGs and Federations As noted earlier, ASSEFA's intermediation efforts have always been driven by a needs-based framework. The organization, while strongly rooted in the Gandhian values of Sarvodaya, is also inspired by Gandhi's pragmatic approach to community/nation-building. ASSEFA's pragmatic approach led it to prioritize the current needs of the community over other aspects. Nonetheless, these need-based activities are conducted with an underlying Sarvodaya spirit. For example, the livelihood interventions were not designed based on social identity and did not follow a class or caste divide but instead focused on the functions and nature of trade. ASSEFA created voluntary membership groups that were based on the nature of economic activities, ensuring that only interested individuals become part of them.

Additionally, given the various positive externalities associated with women's empowerment (Ghatak et al., this volume; Qureshi et al., 2023), ASSEFA engaged women in the majority of their interventions from the outset. This is reflected in building collective structures (i.e., federations, etc.) by women-led SHGs. For example, in each block where ASSEFA was operating, 3000–5000 women were mobilized and organized into SHGs with initial support from the government and IFAD. On average, an SHG had 20 members, and the rules governing group savings, thrift activities, and credit management were tailored to the members' requirements. By utilizing a rotational system with a variable amount, these women were able to meet the credit requirements for consumption and other purposes. Since its

[2] Creating mutual interdependencies has several benefits (Bhatt et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., 2022b; Sutter et al., 2023), as it helps community members trust each other, rely on local resources and exchange, and engage in mutually beneficial activities (Qureshi et al., 2016; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017). This can also be observed in organizational and online contexts (Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018a). It also helps them not fall to polarizing efforts from outsiders and politically vested interests (cf. Qureshi et al., 2020, 2022a).

inception, the SHG mechanism of ASSEFA has mobilized funds of over INR 39 crore. After mobilizing nearly a million women partners in over 14 districts of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the enterprise encountered a significant roadblock when the government withdrew its support. Realizing the potential of such a massive community initiative, ASSEFA was compelled to continue its support. Based on an extensive study, it embarked on establishing independent women-owned and managed financial institutions at the grassroots level to develop an ecosystem for easy accessibility to credit. This led to the formation of Sarvodaya Mutual Benefit Trusts (MBTs), a well-known initiative at the block level. The members of the trusts are effectively the SHGs at the block level. Their purpose is to raise external funds to satisfy SHG's credit requirement. As the name suggests, these MBTs only lend to their member SHGs. Currently, there are over 113 MBTs active in the communities served by ASSEFA.

The SHGs, from their inception, were also enabled as collectives and involved various mechanisms, such as conflict resolution. Women-led SHGs were formed in agricultural and non-agricultural activities such as dairy. Dairy work was a very easily adoptable and beneficial enterprise for women. Since many of them were already engaged with agriculture (directly or indirectly), introducing dairy-related livelihood interventions proved to be complementary. Further, to promote and improve animal productivity, credit facilities were also made available through the MBTs.

The evolution of the dairy interventions of ASSEFA is a prime example of its needs-based framework. Initially, the surplus milk produced after local consumption was sold to the state-led "milk cooperative," a state-wide procurement agency. However, a lack of effective and participatory redressed mechanisms caused a rift between the milk producers and the cooperative. This eventually resulted in women producers establishing their own dairy cooperatives with the help of ASSEFA, effectively dissolving the state-led cooperative's monopoly. Incidentally, the sector currently has no entry restrictions and is home to a number of entities engaged in dairy-related activities.

In appropriate locations, milk processing facilities and bulk refrigeration units were constructed so that surplus milk could be processed and sold via well-connected networks in retail or bulk under distinct brands such as "Seva" and "Sarvodaya." Subsequently, dairy factories were established in multiple locations to provide integrated support for dairy producers. The facilities are registered as female-owned and operated businesses with the purpose of processing and packaging surplus homogenized milk for market sale (Fujita & Sato, 2011). Interestingly, through this mediation, ASSEFA has been able to provide a broader, contextual, and pragmatic definition of Gandhian self-reliance ideals. Its dairy initiatives, while assuring local self-sufficiency, also generate additional wealth for its populace through the export of surplus products. The Gandhian self-reliance paradigm, while rooted in the principles of Sarvodaya, organized village activities around the availability of local resources (Hota et al., 2023). Gandhi proposed that any method of

mobilizing resources for the purpose of meeting local needs should, at most, be carried out locally. Gram Kosh (village treasury) is another successful example of how to build self-reliant communities.

Gram Kosh While SHGs and MBTs partially met the need for credit, the increasing demand and the complexity of the rural context highlighted the need for more robust and sustainable sources of credit and grants. This resulted in the formation of a "Gram Kosh" at the village level. This was only implemented in the villages where the surplus income of the inhabitants was collected into a fund. In order to guarantee decentralized management of the initiative, Nidhi Foundations were established at the village level. The funds were used for implementing the economic program in villages. Members of numerous voluntary groups established these foundations. The funds were allocated for productive activities and were available based on the requests of the groups (functional divisions).

However, this decentralized model encountered several challenges: first, the lack of expertise and leadership; second, as per the legal requirement, the operation of the development fund was only restricted to companies. To address the first challenge, ASSEFA federated the Nidhi Foundations at the regional level along the lines of the MBT. Its purpose was to advise and assist the foundations in administering their funds. To address the second challenge, ASSEFA formed a separate company, the Sarva Jana Seva Kosh (SJSK). According to a recent estimate, the SJSK administers over 25 crore of community funds and provides financial assistance for the development of livelihood operations. ASSEFA also launched Sarvodaya Nano Finance Limited (SNFL), a Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC) to provide microfinance solutions to its members. SNFL is rooted in the Gandhian Trusteeship Model and employs a three-tier community-based structure. It provides financing to SHGs via MBTs, along with life and property insurance. While providing credit to SHG members, the MBTs are also required to purchase all the company's shares, thereby becoming members of the General Body of this NBFC. This guarantees that no external entities are involved in this process (Pathak & Sriram, 2004; Satagopan, 2015). This well-developed community-based financial structure helps in the timely and effective mobilization of community resources for social transformation.

It shows how the Gandhian ideal of a self-reliant community could be achieved through building collective institutions. These community-based institutions (through a clear mandate of conflict resolution) also reduce conflict and promote solidarity. Crucially, they encourage collective ownership and only support private ownership to the extent it is deemed important to earning a respectable livelihood. Developing these trusteeship-based collectives complements ASSEFA's exit strategy and its mission to create a sustainable, and equitable society.

3.4 Phase 4: Partnering for Development

Social challenges such as poverty and inequalities are complex, multi-level, and multi-dimensional problems (George et al., 2016), and addressing them requires a partnership among various actors – government, business, and civil society organizations (George et al., 2024). The same collaborative approach is taken by ASSEFA to scale up and help the most marginalized. It is based on the realization that community development requires a diverse set of organizations engaged in different fields with distinct objectives. To illustrate, as a social intermediary rooted in the social context with a long experience in facilitating community development, ASSEFA understood the complex, uncertain, and dynamic nature of social problems. It also realized that it alone does not have the specialized skills and training required to address the persistent and emerging social problems. As a result, ASSEFA decided to bring in the requisite expertise in terms of skills, technology, and other resources by collaborating with other organizations to bolster the ongoing activities with value-added services. While the extant social enterprise literature highlights tensions and friction in such partnerships (Mitzinneck & Besharov, 2019), in ASSEFA we observe a symbiotic relationship (i.e., Lichenism[3]) between all community stakeholders, including external agents and the state. Lichenism is a complex mechanism that helps us understand inter-organizational processes leading to a synergistic relationship resulting in a virtuous cycle of social impact. The Lichenism approach suggests that a partner's social orientation aids social enterprises in maintaining their focus on social objectives, resulting in optimal societal impact. This is in contrast to a hybridity framework where social enterprises compromise their social and financial outcomes, leading to an unsatisfactory societal impact. The Lichenism perspective directs attention toward reinforcing mechanisms that yield optimal societal impact.

The most notable collaborations of ASSEFA involve numerous government agencies and the state itself. ASSEFA has worked assiduously with the respective state administrations since its inception to provide legislative support for formulating the Bhoodan land distribution, but there have been some challenges. While general red tape and rent-seeking behavior were largely common, there were also fundamental contrasts between the goals of these two entities. This was evidenced in the pursuit of availing sanctions for dairy companies and cooperatives; the state's reluctance to allow a non-state entity to enter the dairy market caused a delay. Nationally, at present, the dairy market in question is crowded with competitors. These issues notwithstanding, ASSEFA is collaborating with various government entities and their agencies. For example, NABARD, a state-owned credit institution, has been ASSEFA's primary partner in financing its watershed programs, which have been essential for irrigating the desolate and arid territories allocated through the Bhoodan lands. They also provide assistance with operational planning and

[3] A lichen is a symbiotic relationship between two or more organisms that interact closely and depend on each other for mutual benefit, consisting of a fungus along with algae and/or bacteria.

assistance in the field of credit for ASSEFA and its beneficiaries, and their efforts have contributed to the creation of a climate that encourages farmers to cultivate more land.

ASSEFA has collaborated with USHA International to build capacity and promote women's self-employment. It also has a partnership with the social organization Rang De, a specialist in innovative microfinance programs, to increase employment opportunities for women-headed households. ASSEFA has also launched a number of health interventions in collaboration with other experts in the field. One such example is ASSEFA's collaboration with Tagore Medical College and Hospital in Chennai to provide comprehensive medical treatment to the members. This partnership also involves collaboration with the state government, which has created a provision of free health insurance and free medical care. This partnership has resulted in the creation of local healthcare infrastructure for providing essential, affordable, and sustainable medical care. As noted above, ASSEFA's collaborative framework is driven by identifying complementary skills and knowledge (Qureshi et al., 2018b, 2022b). ASSEFA uses the knowledge and experience of those working in rural communities to identify the need and the resource gaps. It then identifies partners that are willing and capable of filling that gap. ASSEFA's collaboration framework helps it to expand its operations and enhance the efficacy of its programs. Additionally, by sharing its experiences in community development, the organization also assists other social intermediaries to realize their mission (see Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2021; Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013a, b; Pandey et al., 2021; Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qiu et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2017, 2021b, c, 2023; Zainuddin et al., 2022) for various digital social innovation and sharing economy models at the base of the pyramid.

3.5 The Fifth Phase: Prefiguring Peaceful Future Through Social Justice

Peace and harmony achieved through non-violent processes and social arrangements are at the core of Sarvodaya society. To achieve Sarvodaya, the practices and process of ASSEFA aim to prioritize equitable outcomes and build hope for peaceful and harmonious futures in the present (Bhatt et al., this volume-a). The peace communities envisaged by ASSEFA owe their origins to the Sarvodya order of society formulated by Vinobha Bhave (Bhave, 1957c). Rooted in the broader Gandhian Sarvodaya spirit, these communities will be a harbinger of hope for the marginalized, where there would be distributive justice and harmony among diverse social groups. ASSEFA has launched a Sarvodaya Model of Development program to reinforce these values in its own mission, vision, and implementation processes. For prefiguring such a peaceful society, ASSEFA believes in:

> Improving the economic, social and cultural status of the rural communities and enhancing their skills and self-management capacity. ASSEFA also wants the rural communities to unite without any kind of discrimination and work for the upliftment of the social, cultural, and economic life of all and to establish self-sufficient, self-reliant, and self-managed communities based on the principles of freedom, economic equality, and social justice.

This vision of ASSEFA is enacted *in present* by applying two integral elements of Trusteeship: non-violence and non-possession. ASSEFA hopes that in such a society, all forms of violence will be rejected. The economic activities will be based on social and economic needs and will prioritize the interest of the most marginalized group (Bhatt et al., this volume-b). The "common paradigm" will be integral to such peace communities, and social actors will be engaged in the creation and management of commons, i.e., shared resources that are accessible, inclusive, and democratically managed by and for communities (Hess & Ostrom, 2011; Ostrom, 1990).

These peace societies are complementary to the community economy's principle of the common paradigm. For example, Gibson-Graham et al. (2013) provide five key aspects of a common: access, use, benefit, care, and responsibility. They argue that in order to "common" a resource:

- Access must become shared and inclusive.
- Use must be negotiated by a commoning-community rather than just an individual.
- Benefit must be distributed to the commoning-community or beyond.
- Care must be performed by commoning-community members.
- Responsibility must be assumed by commoning-community members (Dombroski et al., 2019, p. 315).

There is a potential to expand this work through the principle of trusteeship and Sarvodaya.

4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we explored how a social organization creates and manages commons and builds self-reliant communities in socially hierarchical and heterogeneous communities. Following the development trajectory of ASSEFA and its involvement in the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements, this chapter helps in understanding the challenges social intermediaries might encounter in the creation of common. It also provides insights into how these challenges could be navigated by creating livelihood solutions that are context-specific and need-based. Further, the case study also demonstrates how a "trial and error" approach (cf. "muddling through," Lindblom, 1959) rather than predetermined templates might enable social intermediaries to achieve their vision more effectively. Further, contrary to a hybridity framework, ASSEFA applies the *Lichenism* approach within the organization (various projects) and outside partnerships to facilitate social objectives and reinforce mechanisms for optimal societal impact. Finally, ASSEFA's vision of a peaceful

society, which is based on the principle of Sarvodaya, shows that the process of creating a just, equitable order is never complete and it always continues.

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PRADAN: Institution Building for Sustainable Development

Somnath Ghosh

1 Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi had given a talisman:

> I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man [person] whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [them]. Will he [they] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [them] to control over his [their] own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you'll have your doubts and your self-melting away. (Pyarelal, 1958)

Although *Swaraj* meant self-rule, for Gandhi it had a much larger connotation. In "What Swaraj meant to Gandhi?" Gandhian scholar M.P. Mathai writes that for Gandhi, politically, Swaraj is self-government and not good government; economically, it means full economic freedom for the toiling masses (Mathai, 1999).

In the context of PRADAN, Gandhi's talisman and the concept of *Swaraj* both seem to be applicable. Since its genesis in 1982, PRADAN has reached close to two million rural households, touching millions of lives in seven states: Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. And it has more people working in villages in the field of rural development than any other organization other than the government (PRADAN, n.d.).

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2 Creation of a Setting

2.1 Emergence of the Idea

If the history of the formation of (outstanding) organizations is any guide, then it draws attention to the *creation of a setting*. The creation of the setting is a long process; it is iterative in nature, demanding time and effort. The first phase in the creation of a setting is what is called in the literature the *Birth of an Idea – Idea as the Gene* (Reich, 1990; Roberts, 1997). To presume that an idea takes birth out of the blue is a fallacy, for no matter how spontaneous the "discovery" may seem to be, there are years of toil and contemplation behind it.

According to Deep Joshi, then Program Officer at Ford Foundation's New Delhi office and one of the co-founders of PRADAN, he had vague ideas in his head that educated people must work in villages if we want to remove poverty and misery and enhance human dignity rapidly and proactively (Marfatia & Philip, 2019). Soon after returning from MIT, USA, after a double master's in engineering and management, he joined the Ford Foundation. He was asked to work with the village community at Sukhomajri, a village on the catchment of the Sukhna Lake in Chandigarh, India. The lake was getting silted up, and the solution was to undertake extensive soil and water conservation work in the villages in the catchment (Seckler & Joshi, 1982). Deep learned community-based development there from Dr. P.R. Mishra,[1] a maverick soil and water conservation scientist.

In 1977, on a visit to rural Maharashtra, he met Drs. Raj and Mable Arole, a doctor couple both with MDs earned at Johns Hopkins University. The Aroles had pioneered last-mile health care delivery using ordinary village women in rural Maharashtra. The Aroles, with their much-envied qualifications and their zeal for village work, were the first shining examples that Deep encountered of professionals in rural development (Marfatia & Philip, 2019; Arole & Arole, 1994). Deep made up his mind to devote his life to recruiting and placing young professionals in rural development.

In late 1981, Deep visited an NGO, the Association of Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA) projects in Tamil Nadu, to study it as a model for wasteland development. Its founder director, Loganathan explained the problems the organization was already facing in its projects in other states like Bihar. He said he was looking for some way of strengthening the support for the projects. Deep spoke to Loganathan about the possibility of providing professional guidance at the grassroots. This idea appealed to Loganathan a lot, and he sought Deep's help in locating some individuals who could play such a role in ASSEFA.

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[1] Indian soil conservationist and environmentalist P.R. Mishra is attributed with the transformation of Sukhomajri, a small village in Chandigarh's Shivalik Hills valley. He was the chief of the Chandigarh branch of the Central Soil and Water Conservation Research and Training Institute (CSWCRTI) in India. He was a recipient of several awards, including among the highest civilian awards of India, the Padma Shri.

Deep enquired from Prof. Ranjit Gupta of the Indian Institute of Management (IIMA) at Ahmedabad, and he mentioned the name of Vijay Mahajan, an IIMA graduate who was then working with a non-profit rural development consultancy organization in New Delhi. Deep then met Vijay and told him about ASSEFA and its need for grassroots-level professional support. In April 1982, Vijay started on a tour of ASSEFA projects in Tamil Nadu. He was very impressed by what he saw and developed a warm and friendly relationship with Loganathan. Vijay was able to suggest concrete steps for improving some of the efforts.

Loganathan asked Vijay to join ASSEFA. Vijay said that he would be happy to do so, but the kind of problems ASSEFA was facing were in fact generic to voluntary agencies, and Vijay was interested in assisting many such agencies. He also said that he knew many other young professionals who were interested in rural development but were daunted by the different cultures among voluntary agencies.

Vijay felt an organization of professionals assisting rural development agencies would be useful to serve the needs of both voluntary agencies and professionals (Mahajan, 1983; Chowdhury & Willmott, 2019; Dill, 2014; McKinnon, 2007). He told Loganathan of a similar discussion he had with Deep about this idea. Loganathan told Vijay that while he appreciated the idea of a new agency to assist voluntary agencies, the idea would have to be proved on the ground somewhere before it gained wider acceptance among voluntary agencies, professionals, and donor organizations. He said he would be happy to support Vijay in building such an organization, provided the idea was first tried out exclusively with ASSEFA and Vijay was willing to lead it.

2.2 Pilot Testing of the Idea

Vijay made his first visit to ASSEFA in Gaya, one of the districts in Bihar, about 120 km south of the Bihar state capital, Patna, along with Loganathan. Vijay found that ASSEFA's Gaya project was undergoing a crisis at that time. The project budget of INR 2.3 million, which included INR 900,000 of bank loan from the Central Bank of India, Manpur, Gaya, had been spent, but the installation of the various irrigation systems and the land development work were incomplete. The community workers were demoralized, and five out of seven had left. In two or three cases, the Bhoodan allottees accused the community workers of having walked off with project assets such as electric pump sets and threshers. Five new community workers who had recently completed their training at the ASSEFA center in Wardha had just been posted to the project but had not yet been assigned to any village.

At the end of what was supposed to be a four-day visit, Vijay told Loganathan that he would like to stay in Gaya to understand the situation better and come up with a plan to do something about it. He then called his wife and told her that he was going to stay back in Bihar for another three weeks. Vijay spent six weeks instead of three in the Gaya project, moving from village to village, inspecting the incomplete works, and organizing meetings with the beneficiaries to understand the

situation. Vijay began to live in a village ashram – a two-roomed hut with no toilet or bath.

As the project was primarily for agriculture development, the provision of irrigation and land leveling were key components of it. Vijay found that only 14 of the 47 borewells sunk by the project were being used; the others were unusable for a variety of reasons: some had failed altogether due to clogging; in others, the water level fell after the monsoon and the pumps could not raise water; and in all cases, no distribution system had been planned for conveying the water to land at a higher level than the borewell. Land leveling had been done on only about 150 acres of the total 500 odd acres. However, such allottee farmers, who had leveled their land and started getting water from the functioning borewells, had benefited.

Vijay organized a series of Gram Sabha[2] meetings in each of the project villages. He explained the need to change the earlier ways of functioning. He asked the allottees what they thought of working in small groups organized around each water source, such as a tubewell or intake well. Typically, each water source irrigated between 15 and 20 acres of land and had between 10 and 15 allottees whose land fell in the command area of the water source. He also explained that the assets pertaining to the water source (borewell, diesel/electric pump set, etc.) would be given to them as a group, and they would be responsible for managing each.

Vijay prepared a detailed rehabilitation proposal for the project by the end of August 1982 and discussed it with Diwakar*ji*. The proposed rehabilitation proposal included multifaceted interventions. For the expedited completion of the irrigation and land development projects, an additional INR 500,000 had to be raised from donors. The loan from the Central Bank of India was to be rescheduled so that there is a moratorium on payments for a year. This, along with an increased contribution of beneficiaries in terms of labor, was sought which was the primary factor in the impending land development work. Organizing the beneficiaries around a shared irrigation source and entrusting them with its management was next. The proposal also laid out the need for stronger links with government development agencies so that ASSEFA could tap into some of the government's programs, and lastly, measures to strengthen the project team by adding a project in-charge and a technical assistant to assist the project director with day-to-day field supervision were envisaged.

Vijay sent this rehabilitation plan to Loganathan after a discussion with T. K. Matthew[3] in Delhi. Vijay also kept Deep informed and received valuable technical inputs as well as a lot of encouragement from him. In September 1982, Vijay received Loganathan's approval of the rehabilitation plan and an advance of INR

[2] The Gram Sabha works as the general body of a village council, deriving its members from the community itself, who are democratically elected. In the Indian context, it is a powerful body with powers vested by the constitution. It is closely linked to concepts of trusteeship and commoing (see Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, in this book).

[3] Recruited by Loganathan, the Chief of ASSEFA, as part of their professionalization drive. T. K. Matthew is a Gandhian and a graduate in agriculture with decades of field experience.

200,000 from a donor who had agreed to finance the completion of the Gaya project. Vijay went back in October.

All the work related to the borewells in the first stage was completed by the middle of November 1982 so that it could be in time for the sowing of wheat. This directly benefited over 100 Bhoodan families, most of whom grew their own food for the first time in their lives. It was a very satisfying experience for Vijay and the team of young community workers. In the other five villages, the land-leveling and bunding work began with adequate speed. This time, since ASSEFA was paying only subsistence wages for land leveling, and that too on a loan basis, the need to supervise work declined sharply as each allottee farmer became the supervisor of the others. Thus, by the end of January 1983, 32 water sources were activated, and nearly 300 acres of land were brought under irrigated cultivation.

A consultant hired by the ASSEFA donor consortium gave a favorable report to the consortium of donors and commended ASSEFA's new approach of recruiting professionals from outside the Sarvodaya fold to work with ASSEFA's community workers.

Readers may wonder why so much detail was expended on one of ASSEFA's projects; after all, this is the story of PRADAN, not of ASSEFA. That's because the workability of the idea of PRADAN had to be first tested in the field, and ASSEFA provided the opportunity. To that extent, it is as much the story of the creation of the setting that led to the formal establishment of PRADAN. It was as if, through the ASSEFA projects, the genetic code of PRADAN was being established.

3 The Seed of the Organization

Loganathan was impressed with what had happened and asked Vijay to proceed with his original idea of getting more professionals to work in grassroots development. Vijay learned about Achintya Ghosh, who had graduated a couple of years earlier from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) at Kharagpur with a B. Tech. in Agricultural Engineering and was working with OXFAM's Western Orissa Project. Vijay wrote to Achintya, inviting him to visit ASSEFA Gaya to give some technical guidance. Subsequently, Achintya joined ASSEFA in March 1983 as the State Project Coordinator of Bihar.

Meanwhile, M. P. Vasimalai was finishing his MBA at IIM, Ahmedabad. Vasimalai came from a farming family, and before he joined IIMA, he had already earned a Master's in Agronomy as well as a wife (though the latter two events had possibly little to do with each other!). Vasimalai soon joined as the State Project Coordinator of Tamil Nadu in April 1983.

In 1982, the Ford Foundation approved a grant to ASSEFA and applied to the Government of India (GoI) for prior permission. The GoI informally told the Foundation that it could not permit funds to ASSEFA as Gandhian voluntary organizations (VOs) were under a cloud then and the government had appointed an inquiry commission against them. The Foundation decided then that a new

organization would be set up right away that would not only help ASSEFA but also other VOs, though initially giving priority to ASSEFA's needs.

Vijay was ready to play the role of setting up the new organization while continuing the intense field work he was doing for ASSEFA to improve the effectiveness of its work. Vijay came up with the name PRADAN – which was at once the acronym for "professional assistance for development action" as well signified reciprocal giving in Sanskrit. Vijay emphasized that while "*dan*" in Sanskrit meant charity, "*Pradan*" meant to give back in exchange, often used as the phrase "*aadan-pradan.*"

Vijay selected Bhoodan Day,[4] the 18 of April, as the day to register PRADAN as a society under the Societies Registration Act. The first meeting of the Governing Board of PRADAN took place in Bangalore. The members elected Aloysius Fernandez as Chairman, with Loganathan as the Vice-Chairman and Mr. Mathew as Treasurer. Vijay was appointed the first Executive Director of PRADAN.

To understand PRADAN, we have to look, as Karl Weick calls it in his classic book *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, at the *process* of organizing and not so much about structures, where organizational life is a "sequence, motion, implementation of recipes, chains of events, series of actions … narrative-like constructions" (Weick, 1979). In yet another classic study, *The Creation of Settings and the Future Societies*, Seymour Bernard Sarason offers a detailed analysis of the social process of creating a setting where he addresses the key question, *What kind of leadership does it require?* This neglected problem has significance, especially for those who are engaged in creating new settings (Sarason, 1972).

The creation of the setting had already etched four indelible facets in PRADAN's genetic code.

- The first was the need to recruit professionals who exhibited a strong sense of commitment to work for the poor. Without that value system, nothing will work in the long run (Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Kumar et al., this volume). It is also the starting point to live in difficult conditions and to engage with the poor.
- The second was embeddedness. For PRADAN professionals, to be embedded is to be one with the ecosystem. A development organization that is not embedded in the constituency it serves would not know what the real problems are and the likely solutions (Bhatt et al., 2022; Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Javeri et al., this volume); it will neither inspire nor elicit grassroots support for specific programs or projects.
- The third facet was technical competence, for even if you have the heart to work for the poor and the disadvantaged, you must have the knowledge and skills to make things happen (Kumar et al., this volume; Bhatt et al., this volume-b).
- The fourth was the need to work with development partners to improve their professional effectiveness (Kumar et al., this volume).

[4] Considered the day of the initiation of the Bhoodan (Land gift) Movement by Acharya Vinobha Bhave, a Gandhian social reformer.

4 Internal Processes for Growth and Evolution

Almost immediately after PRADAN was established, the Ford Foundation made a grant of USD 150,000 for a three-year period budgeted to last until the end of 1986. As Vijay wrote in one of his letters in August 1985 to Lincoln Chen of the Ford Foundation, in a year, PRADAN was:

> able to build a team of 12 full-time professionals who are providing long-term, on-the-spot, technical and management assistance to rural development agencies, apart from attracting over thirty professionals to work in rural development on a short-term basis. (And) this is the first effort to put management and technical professionals to work on the frontline of development projects, in a systematic and sustained manner.

While the early PRADAN professionals derived great satisfaction from the learning they were undergoing, the concern was not to get cut off from the overall learning within PRADAN. The structural solution that Vijay invented was to meet occasionally as a collective, where they shared their experiences and assessed their role and performance, and to "develop a core identity." In line with Gandhian values of deliberative dialogue (Parel, 2019; Patil & Sinha, this volume), these initial "meets" as they were then called, were to become a salient feature in the evolution of PRADAN in the form of periodic Retreats of 3 days, where key issues are discussed and are symbolic of the democratic functioning of the organization.

In the early years of PRADAN, questions would revolve around focus, strategic spread, and organization: to what extent was PRADAN still serving the earlier purpose of assisting voluntary organizations, and how much of the effort was going into this activity in comparison with the others? Questions of focus and strategy were raised in the context of identity and the purpose for which it was created. During those days, the concern to improve the technical and management competencies of other NGOs was a valid one. During the early days, many proposals and activities were shot down because the "action" component was not there; implementation was the mantra.

In 1986, Deep Joshi joined PRADAN after leaving the Ford Foundation. Both Vijay and Deep felt the need to review where PRADAN stood at this stage and reflect on what could be its focus. During the Retreat at Tawa Nagar in Madhya Pradesh in 1988, three kinds of issues were discussed that were agitating the minds of Pradanites:

- PRADAN's identity and purpose, strategy, and capability.
- Their own identity vis-à-vis the definition of "development professionals".
- How do voluntary organizations feel about them, and what role should they play in working with voluntary organizations?

This dimension of Pradanites to look within, reflect, and debate that blossomed in the early evolutionary stage was to remain the leitmotif of its way of working. Not that everything comes to the surface, or even when they do, these may not garner as much attention as they ought to.

In August 1988, Deep and Vijay prepared an elaborate 59-page document titled "Developing Human Resources and Promoting Innovation for Poverty Alleviation and Rural Community Development" that served as a basis for seeking donor funding. It acknowledged that alleviation of poverty would, among other things, require continuous experimentation and innovation to bring unexploited traditional as well as emerging economic opportunities within the reach of the poor. The proposal emphasized that there were innumerable traditional as well as emerging economic opportunities that could provide livelihoods to the poor. However, opening these opportunities was often beyond the scope of the poor because it required experimentation, an adaptation of technology, building and managing multiple linkages, institution building, and risk-taking ability (Qureshi et al., this volume).

As PRADAN would evolve and grow over the years and many things would change, the core elements established by the creation of the setting would ensure that the organization would essentially stay true to the very purpose of its creation. In the next section, we provide a broad sweep of what it did in terms of programs and activities and the rationale for such interventions.

5 Four Phases of PRADAN's Evolution

It is possible to identify four phases in PRADAN's evolution and growth: (1) attempts to professionalize other NGOs from the inside by seeding its professionals in the host organization; (2) experimentation with livelihood ideas that tend to combine innovation and technology with market viability; (3) working with women SHGs and giving increasing primacy to their overall well-being in addition to economic consideration; and (4) the focus on rights and justice. It is not suggested that these phases are distinct; overlaps are endemic to the evolutionary nature of organizational life.

5.1 The First Phase: Technical and Management Assistance to NGOs

In line with the idea of its creation, in the initial years, PRADAN executives were placed in host organizations with the stated objective of improving the outcomes through technical and management inputs. As already mentioned, PRADAN started off with three professionals. Each one of them was placed in ASSEFA. Interestingly, for the first many months, while they had the identity of PRADAN professionals, their salaries were fully paid for by ASSEFA. Vijay had pulled this off due to the special bond he had built with Loganathan, the ED of ASSEFA, who had seen the impact of Vijay's work in turning around ASSEFA's Bihar projects. The work that

the three early Pradanites did for ASSEFA prompted requests for similar support from other organizations.

A few more joined by mid-1984, and they were seconded to other NGOs. The focus was on operational orientation through Action Consulting Teams (ACTs). These fell into two categories. In the first category were requests from other voluntary organizations like Gram Vikas and MYRADA; in the second fell requests from organizations like SIFFS (South India Federation of Fishermen's Societies), which were producers' organizations. By 1987, PRADAN professionals were working at the grassroots with the following NGOs:

- ASSEFA – integrated rural development.
- Mahiti – wasteland development and water conservation.
- Seva Mandir – social forestry in *adivasis* (indigenous) blocks.
- Deendayal Research Institute – artisan development.
- Kalyan – water resources and agriculture development.
- Nishtha and Mahila Jagran Samiti – women's income generation program.
- Manipal Industrial Trust – design of lift irrigation programs.

While the ACTs that PRADAN established were a structural response to provide technical and management assistance, it was soon realized that someone needs to provide collegial support to deal with relationship issues and to provide emotional support to colleagues working in an isolated work environment (Kiel & Watson, 2009; Humphrey, 2021). Within months of his secondment in Seva Mandir, the PRADAN professional left the organization. Three reasons came to the forefront: (1) inadequate support from Seva Mandir management, (2) inadequate experience and organizational skill of the PRADAN staff seconded to Seva Mandir, and (3) inadequate backup from PRADAN. Corrective action was taken by Vijay in terms of negotiating better before entry, getting more experienced professionals, and asking other senior colleagues to provide backup support.

5.2 The Second Phase: Experimenting with New Livelihoods

Even as PRADAN continued to work with host NGOs, the feeling grew among its professionals that they were better off investing their technical and management competencies in devising and implementing projects of their own. The first such attempt was the TRIAD project. TRIAD stood for Teams for Rural Industrialization and Artisan Development, which was specially conceived by Vijay at the request of the Industrial Development Bank of India and its visionary leader, Dr. SA Dave.

Vijay chose Sankar Datta, a graduate in agriculture from Punjab Agriculture University and in rural management from the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA) and who was seconded to Anand Niketan's farm forestry project to work on the TRIAD project. They together chose Kesla in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh state, one with which they both had prior familiarity. Sankar

brought in three summer interns from IRMA, and they all worked on developing a detailed proposal on TRIAD presented first to the PRADAN Board and then to the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI). This was a major step forward for PRADAN, as it amounted to starting projects on its own.

This effort was characterized by four approaches, which were implemented together.

5.2.1 Sub-sector Approach

The subsector approach by which a large number of sustainable livelihoods can be promoted (Ghatak et al., this volume; Mishra & Shukla, this volume; Sen & Mahajan, 2011) was first tried in the Kesla project (Bhatt et al., 2013; Kistruck et al., 2013a, b; Venkataraman et al., 2016). It began focusing on livelihood promotion through broiler chicken rearing and mushroom farming and got financial support from IDBI, NABARD, and the local District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). Meanwhile, there was progress in other projects to promote rural livelihood sub-sectors.

This included livelihood promotion based on the flaying of dead cattle and tanning of hides, with the flayers' cooperatives in Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, led by Biswajit Sen, an IIM Ahmedabad postgraduate, and Vinod Jain, an IIT Kharagpur engineer; and the cultivation of tasar silk cocoons in the Godda district of Bihar under the leadership of Mithliesh Jha, a sericulture entomologist, who joined PRADAN on deputation from the Central Tasar Silk Research Institute. The Barabanki project was supported by Oxfam, while the Godda project was supported by the National Wasteland Development Board (NWDB), which agreed to make a grant of INR 217,350.

Starting with Kesla, Barabanki, and Godda for poultry, leather, and tasar, respectively, this approach has remained a hallmark of PRADAN. While technology, quality inputs (seeds), and the application of "best" practices are important to raising productivity, these are not necessarily the elements that poor farmers are aware of, have control over, or much less practice. To bring about these interventions, PRADAN had to engage in the difficult process involved in building not just linkages but a collaborative polygon with multiple players.

5.2.2 Application of Technology

The second approach involved the application of technology and better farming practices. While many instances abound, reference to the two sub-sectors in which PRADAN worked should suffice.

Household Poultry Rearing[5]

The traditional method of hatching eggs that Kesla *adivasis* (indigenous) communities engaged in backyard poultry rearing – where only 10 to 12 eggs could be put under one hen – was highly unsatisfactory for large-scale production of baby chicks. But the shift to sophisticated rearing of broilers required "intermediation" of poultry rearing technology. Four aspects were involved. The first was the setting up of centralized brooding facilities in a village. This intervention was the outcome of learning from a mistake that PRADAN made in the initial stages when the rearers were simply given day-old chicks for rearing, which resulted in high mortality. But with the setting up of centralized brooding facilities began the supply of three-week-old brooded birds to the rearers, which reduced brooder mortality significantly.

There is a saying in the poultry industry that goes like this: "fail to prepare and be prepared to fail." The second related aspect of PRADAN's intervention was biotechnical and biosecurity, focusing on those actions and practices that reduce the spread or transmission of pathogenic microorganisms, and thus reduce the incidence of disease. Therefore, medicines, veterinary care, and rearing equipment (cages, feeders, waterers, etc.) were also provided under the project.

The third aspect was logistics management. According to Vijay Mahajan, who was the first Executive Director of PRADAN, between June 1986 and May 1988, the project provided over 50,000 birds in 25 batches for rearing to more than 60 *adivasis* (indigenous) households in 6 villages of the Kesla block. But the day-old chicks had to be procured from Delhi, 800 km away, while the feed was procured from Indore, 300 km away, and the full-grown birds were marketed at the state capital, Bhopal, 125 km away, and nearby smaller markets.

Evidently, these could be managed and sustained only if women rearers were organized, trained, and motivated. So, the fourth aspect related to human technology focuses on the interaction between people and technology, and institutional development. By 2010, poultry rearing would emerge as the single most important activity in Kesla, and because of institutional development activities fostered by PRADAN, this activity is now being managed independently by Kesla Poultry Samiti (KPS),[6] a part of Madhya Pradesh Women's Poultry Cooperative Ltd. (MPWPCL), which is today an INR 500 crore conglomerate and the largest such intervention in central India.

While the Kesla model was not just pioneering using ideas and methods that had not been used before (the details of which have been well documented in a Good

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[5] Kesla Poultry provides a great example of implementing a project that has both social and economic outcomes, objectives most social enterprises (cf. Bhatt et al., 2019; Hota et al., 2019; Qureshi et al., 2016) and digital social innovators strive to achieve (cf. Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2021; Qiu et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018a, 2022b; Zainuddin et al., 2022).

[6] By 2010, KPS had already "emerged as a model of a people-owned and people-centric organization, the likes of which civil society organizations in the country have continuously tried to promote and establish." See Harshvardhan, "Poultry Rearing as an Income-Generating Activity in Kesla: An Impact Assessment Study," *NewsReach*, Vol. 11, No. 11, November–December 2010.

Practice Note[7] under the aegis of NDDB and FAO), it became the leitmotif as well as the modus operandi of PRADAN's subsequent work on promoting livelihoods through community participation. As Biswajit Sen, an IIM Ahmedabad alumnus and one of the early members of PRADAN's senior management team, notes:

> (a) the project had a variety of innovative features, which define different dimensions of rural development projects. These include the introduction of new technologies, new kinds of community participation models, new models of scaled-down production with low investment, which allowed the poor to participate, new avenues of marketing by the communities themselves, and a wide set of integrated activities; (b) the project was implemented over a long period of time by PRADAN (and continues to be implemented by it), often for 20 years; (c) the projects were gradually scaled up along several dimensions; and (d) the project model has been adopted in multiple locations either by PRADAN or by other agencies helped by PRADAN.[8]

Tasar Silk Rearing

The innovations in the tasar sub-sector that PRADAN undertook were also over a long period of time. In the development sector, it is important to note the time dimension because it takes time for an innovation to take root, get adopted by a large number of people, and ultimately develop an organizational form owned and managed by the collective (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume). In all these aspects, the Tasar project was no different than the poultry project at Kesla. As co-founder Deep Joshi was to put it, "there were ups and downs, dead-ends, serendipity, brilliant breakthroughs and all manner of drama – the hallmarks of a PRADAN initiative."

Before we go into the project details, it may be worthwhile to sketch the life cycle (which actually corresponds to its value chain) of tasar production that typically occurred before PRADAN's intervention (Fig. 1).

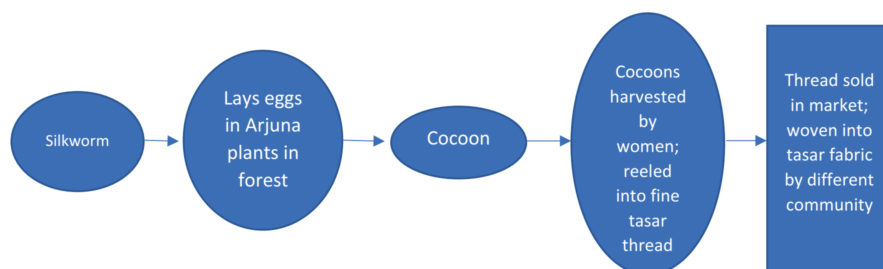

Fig. 1 Genesis of the experiment

[7] See Hare Krishna Deka and Anish Kumar, "Making Modern Poultry Markets Work for the Poor" – Good Practice Note. South Asia Pro Poor Livestock Policy Programme (NDDB & FAO: 2009). Readers may access the PDF file from www.sapplpp.org/goodpractices/small-holder-poultry

[8] From development professional Biswajit Sen's *Empowering the Rural Poor through Livelihoods* (Sen, 2019). Biswajit's work also carries a succinct account of the Kesla poultry project.

It was in 1987 that PRADAN first began exploring tasar as an intervention to help *adivasis* (indigenous) populations of the Chota Nagpur plateau increase their options of livelihood. But before PRADAN began working in the villages to promote tasar-based livelihoods, it carried out an exhaustive review of the sector. Funded by the Ford Foundation, the study included a market survey and a thorough reconnaissance to identify a suitable project location.

Locating the Project

Once PRADAN decided to go ahead with the project as an outcome of the above study, the first concern was to decide on the location where the project would be implemented. As Deep was to observe:

> (The) received wisdom was that you had to have at least 25 ha blocks of plantations. We knew individual farmers would not have 25 ha of land to raise Arjuna plantations and decided to source government wastelands for plantations. The initial goal was to get about 100 ha. So the 'tasar model' we settled on was to lease 25 ha blocks of Arjuna plantations on government wastelands to farmers to rear tasar cocoons and support them with inputs and marketing.

Since PRADAN was already working in Kesla in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh, PRADAN decided to locate the project in the same area, where wasteland was available in plenty and the climate was suitable for rearing. Moreover, there was already a tradition and practice of tasar rearing and weaving in the state, which was popularly known as the kosa rearing and kosa industry. Considering PRADAN already had an establishment at Sukhtawa in the Hoshangabad district of the state, its executives started their search for grounding the project in and around the district of Hoshangabad. But due to changes in government priorities, the land was no longer available. So, the project shifted to Godda, then the undivided Bihar.

While the land was easily available, many of the patches were owned by the villagers, including small and marginal farmers. PRADAN's preconceived model, therefore, of raising plantations on government land was not feasible.

The First Stumbling Block

Like any other project in the early stages, there were challenges galore. Almost everybody associated with the project at that time said the biggest challenge was to convince the local *adivasis* (indigenous) community that developing systematic plantations for tasar cultivation was worth it, especially because the returns were not going to be immediate and would only be visible after 3 years. But it was not just a question of uncertainty; many doubted PRADAN's intentions: "What is your benefit? Why are you interested in this? There must be some personal benefit to you (PRADAN) by doing this." There was skepticism that this project would bring any benefits to the people of the villages.

From Demonstration Plot to Setting Up Kisan Nurseries

PRADAN set up a demo plantation in August 1987 and developed a nursery of Terminalia Arjuna at Shivdham as per the specifications of the Central Tasar Research and Training Institute (CTR&TI). But doing these things wasn't easy. To begin with, there was little enthusiasm among the *adivasis* (indigenous) community

for the demonstration plot, as there was a widespread belief that the tasar worm would only grow in the wild. Moreover, as Biswajit Sen was to acknowledge, there was no clarity among the team members about how the communities were meant to be mobilized.

However, PRADAN executives knew that in community-based development work, the initial investments of time are high, and the greater the investment made in building leadership amongst them, the stronger the roots of the project and the more beneficial it is for work in the future.

Necessity being the mother of invention, one of the innovations PRADAN came up with at that time (which is now standard practice) was to identify and recruit local cadres at the village level to work with them. Several trips for the local community were also organized to expose them to government tasar plantations and how these were being managed. By the end of the second year, PRADAN had a number of nursery growers and plantation sites in the region, which then served the purposes of showcasing plantations and convincing people. Gradually, Shivdham lost its importance as a demonstration site.

The next challenge was to garner funds for the plantation in the following year, 1988. The cost of raising a plantation, as per the norms of CTR&TI, was high, and it was expected to give returns only after 4 years. The plantation cost was treated as a risky proposition (or investment) in financial terms by the people. There were also some "ifs" and "buts" related to the survival of the plantation and the success of the rearing activity.

The plantation cost was high because the spacing between the plants and the rows was close, that is, 4 ft. × 4 ft. Each hectare of land was expected to lodge more than 6700 plants. In order to reduce the costs, we considered a proposition of the spacing being 6 ft. × 6 ft. The logic behind this shift was that a greater spacing would not just reduce input costs, but "leaf-yield per plant increases when the spacing between the plants is increased."

With the help of the local boys in potential villages, PRADAN started collecting Arjuna seeds and holding meetings in villages to organize a kisan (farmers) nursery and finalize the list of plantations. The camps were intended to select farmers who would be guided to become entrepreneurs of kisan nurseries and who would also be motivators-cum-guides for those who wanted to develop tasar plantations in the catchment of their nursery.

A small team of local workers was assembled and trained to gear up plantation activities, including the selection of sites, the digging of pits, the supervision of nurseries, the distribution of saplings, and their transplantation. Later, the tasks of cultural operation, maintenance, and protection were also included. Gradually, committed youngsters with managerial qualifications and professional orientation joined the team at different points in time.

Setting Up Grainages

While the preparations for raising the plantations were going on, they discovered that tasar rearing in the traditional way was in practice on a sizeable scale in the forest batches and paddy bunds in a number of stretches (pockets) at Sunderpahari

(Godda), Kothidinda (Banka), and Bhaljor (Dumka). However, production was constrained in these groves (locally called Pahi) due to the paucity of quality disease-free laying (DFLs) to rear tasar worms. PRADAN field managers realized that the microscopic examination of a smear taken from the mother moths was a scientific necessity to ensure the production of quality seeds in the form of DFLs. Tasar farmers either keep the cocoons at their household for production of laying (not necessarily disease-free) or procure them from state farms, which were scanty. State farms maintain centralized grainage to preserve cocoons and produce DFLs. Support was needed to market the cocoon harvest for a fair return. In order, therefore, to support traditional rearers and intensify project activities, PRADAN started a captive grainage in a rented, khapda-covered house to produce and supply DFLs without waiting for plantations to mature.

But the centralized grainage created its own logistical challenges in sending DFLs to far-flung villages. An alternative idea of setting up smaller grainages in or near the villages where the rearers lived emerged. It transpired that making DLFs is not quite rocket science; anyone who can use a 10x optical microscope to spot a pretty conspicuous pattern if the sample comes from a diseased moth and maintains a degree of hygiene can make DLFs. Much of the work, even in CSB establishments, is done by laborers hired on daily wages. And the idea of a "grainage entrepreneur" was born.

5.2.3 Failure and Frustration

Experimentation, by definition, carries the risk of failure (Bhatt et al., this volume-a, b; Kumar et al., this volume; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume). People at PRADAN acknowledge that their "learning by doing" credo carries that risk, and they are therefore mindful of the need to engage deeply before embarking on the action. Yet, the toll can be heavy.

Looking back, Deep reminiscences:

> Private Arjuna plantations, the idea of selling DLFs and the grainage entrepreneur, I think, are the seeds of transformation in the sector. These were huge breakthroughs, invented in the first couple of years of the program, without much (fanfare). All the later breakthroughs would not have been possible without these first breakthroughs.

Community Participation

Even as seed-stock multiplication became a grand success, there was another hurdle to cross. The plantations needed to be protected to ensure their survival and fitness for rearing. Over the next 3 years, while the plantations took root, the primary investment was on how to prepare the community to take up the entire activity in a more systematic manner. During those days, the experience of organizing communities was new to PRADAN professionals. Many of the earlier batches of development apprentices were frustrated that, in spite of their efforts, the community was not ready to get organized, even though what was being suggested to them was for their own benefit. But their persistence with their credo of "learning while doing"

slowly yielded results. For example, according to the project proposal, there was a provision for trench fencing. However, this was not found to be so effective. Hence, social fencing was emphasized. Every family owning a part of the plantation was made responsible for protecting the plantation from animal grazing by rotation. The money available for trench fencing was distributed proportionately among the farmers in the ratio of the surviving plants. The timely cultural operation also contributed to the growth and protection of the plantation sites, which were numbered and the progress of which was monitored on a regular basis.

Scaling Up

The stage was now set for scaling up the project. This was made possible through the special SGSY project. During the project period, the results were consistently spectacular. This established PRADAN's credibility as a significant actor in the tasar sector. In the concluding review meeting of the UNDP project in 2002, the funders expressed their eagerness to upscale the initiative. The Member Secretary of CSB took note of it and decided to visit PRADAN's project areas to see the impact on the ground and explore future possibilities with the PRADAN team. The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India, agreed to meet 75 percent of the cost; the remaining came from CSB. For the first time in the history of tasar sericulture, the sector received such large-scale financial support (to the tune of Rs 28 crore). Two separate projects, one each for Bihar and Jharkhand, were considered for funding under the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (SGSY) Special Projects.

Over the next 3 years, beginning in 2003, PRADAN promoted 2000 ha of plantations on private lands owned by around 2800 families. Drawing on its learning on farmer selection, nursery raising, and plantation maintenance, PRADAN established plantations in large patches successfully. These helped in generating robust livelihoods for rearing households subsequently. PRADAN set up 260 private grainages (over a three-and-a-half-fold increase from the UNDP project) to prepare 7.80 lakh DFLs annually and cater to 5000 rearers, producing 30 million cocoons annually.

The Turning Point: Foundation Seed Production

As events unfolded, PRADAN's intervention was to lead to foundation seed production. At first, the CSB's grainages lacked personnel power to carry out critical operations. PRADAN proposed that the expanded pool of grainage owners in project villages could assist CSB to perform all the operations in their grainages to maintain the quality of DFLs. Against this, CSB would need to assure foundation seed supply to grainage owners. This arrangement was adopted in CSB grainages and helped in the improvement of foundation seed supply and, thereby, the attainment of growth as planned for the projects.

Second, PRADAN proposed to undertake the foundation seed preparation and requested CSB to hand over one of its foundation seed units. The proposal was, in some ways, a bit radical because CSB never thought that any other agency could take up this role. CSB hesitated about handing over this role to PRADAN. However, in the subsequent meetings with CSB over the next 2 months, PRADAN remained

firm on this count. On this matter, PRADAN was greatly helped by two senior scientists who were integrating SGSY projects on behalf of CSB; they actively supported PRADAN's entry into foundation seed production.

But the journey wasn't without missteps. When, sometime in 2005, PRADAN initiated the foundation seed grainage, CSB offered them one of their foundation seed production units in Deoghar, Jharkhand. But PRADAN wasn't really familiar with the nitty-gritty of the foundation seed grainage, which required 6–7 months of engagement. PRADAN hadn't figured out that the cocoons preserved in the grainage were the harvest from the previous crops, and the presence of disease in the cocoons (of the previous crops) could lead to high eruption of disease in foundation seed grainages and cause a complete failure.

Therefore, it was only after initial setbacks that PRADAN was able to harvest 75 cocoons per DFL, and, more importantly, these were absolutely free of infection. Next month, in January 2007, PRADAN consigned the cocoon lot for preservation in three buildings closer to Deoghar (where its office was located) for better monitoring and follow-up.

In the next three consecutive years, PRADAN succeeded in foundation seed production, simultaneously expanding the activity to three more locations. In this journey, PRADAN kept the CSB in the loop through the joint monitoring of grainage functions. It seems CSB was convinced about the progress, as it felt the need to support the work with better infrastructure. In 2010, funds were arranged from the SGSY Special Projects to set up a new building for the foundation seed grainage. Over the next 2 years, with the support of CSB and NABARD, PRADAN set up three such units, and its dependence on CSB for foundation seed supply came down to just about 10 percent by 2012. Further, all foundation seed grainages received an ISO 9001: 2008 certificate, a pioneering feat in the tasar sector. The certification helped in developing the protocol of quality seed production, right from silkworm rearing to foundation seed production. It also improved the data recording system.

5.2.4 From Institutional Mechanisms to Social Enterprise

Around the time when PRADAN ventured into setting up private grainages, a parallel development was taking shape. By 2003, it was obvious that the volume of the tasar business was sufficient to hive it out to a producer-owned entity as the activity had stabilized and was self-sustaining. By that time also, PRADAN had already pioneered the poultry model at Kesla. Typically, when organizations achieve path-breaking success in one area, there's a tendency to replicate the same business model (Kumar et al., this volume). But working at the grassroots, PRADAN leadership and front-line managers were acutely aware that the ground realities, as well as market conditions of poultry rearing and tasar manufacture, were very different. Therefore, a model was sought to be built which would be simple and manageable by the community, and all other engagements such as weaving would be a means to an end, with the end being a self-sustaining market for the yarn being produced in the project.

They had a simple mantra. For every 25 kg of yarn they used in fabric weaving or sold in the market, they could help create a year-round source of income for one yarn maker. So all their energy was focused on creating more and more demand for the yarn. Although wholesaling fetches a lower margin per unit, it is more amenable to moving larger volumes, resulting in more yarn usage. And so, PRADAN made wholesaling a key to its business strategy.

Discussions were therefore held within PRADAN to chart the course and structure of the new entity. A producer company – Masuta Producer Company – was registered, and the entire business of yarn and fabric was transferred to it in 2004–2005. The sale of yarn and textiles in 2003–2004 was about Rs 1.4 crore. Later, it was decided to hive off the textile weaving part out of Masuta into a joint venture (JV), in which the investments made under the project in fabric stock and receivables in the market would be partly capitalized in favor of Masuta and the rest shall be given to the JV as an interest-bearing loan from Masuta.

Back to Institution Building: Establishing Tasar Development Foundation
While a social enterprise like Ecostar is a welcome initiative, as the literature suggests, it is still limited by its field of operation, client system, and market conditions (Hota et al. 2023; Qureshi et al., 2023). But if the tasar theme had to be strengthened, a sector development approach was needed. If we recall, PRADAN's initiative in tasar began in Godda district of Jharkhand in 1987 and subsequently expanded to other parts of the state and the adjoining states of Bihar and Odisha. So by 2012, PRADAN was already involved in tasar sericulture for over two-and-a-half decades, with the objective of creating sustainable livelihoods for marginalized communities. Through this period, PRADAN had worked on all the components of the tasar silk value chain – the establishment of host tree plantations, the setting up of the entire seed vertical, the promotion of improved practices for silkworm rearing, the processing of cocoons into yarns, the weaving of fabric, and the creation of alternative marketing channels for tasar commodities.

So, in 2012, PRADAN embarked on a discussion to revisit its approach and strategy that necessitated an organization-wide restructuring. In the same year, it partnered with CSB to prepare a multi-state tasar project for consideration under MoRD. The emerging idea was to launch a scale-up plan for generating livelihoods in the sector, owing to the favorable macro context: high demand in the market, the assurance of large-scale public finance for the tasar sector, and the demands for sustainable livelihoods among the rural communities, among other things. There was no other organization in the state or in the private sector other than PRADAN (more specifically, its tasar team), which had the commitment, expertise, and ground presence to further the tasar sector's development, to spearhead major initiatives in the sector, and to push the frontiers. The outcome was the establishment of the Tasar Development Foundation (TDF), the beginning of a new chapter.

It's been a long journey for PRADAN in tasar development to promote sustainable livelihoods. Biswajit Sen, one of the early pillars of PRADAN, put it aptly:

> I am proud that the seeds we sowed in the early years have emerged as one of the key large-scale integrated interventions of PRADAN over the years. Persisting with an idea, over a long period of time, stretching over several years, has always been the strength of PRADAN.

5.2.5 Dealing with Markets Through Producers' Collectives

The third approach was the importance of dealing with markets (Mishra & Shukla, this volume). PRADAN learned early on, in the Kesla, Barabanki, and Godda projects, that there is strength in numbers. Market players behaved differently when they dealt with a representative of 20 or 100 producers, whether she was buying inputs for all of them or selling the produce of all to them than how they behaved with single producers (Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013a; Sutter et al., 2023). The full-grown birds are marketed at the state capital, Bhopal, 125 km away, and nearby smaller markets like Hoshangabad and Sarani. Sales were also made to local highway-side dhabas.

The cultivation of warm-weather oyster mushrooms by the villagers in Kesla as a livelihood idea was selected due to the fact that the skill can be acquired comparatively easily. The market for mushrooms is barely tapped, and there is an enormous potential, both in the domestic and export markets as indicated by a survey. The harvested mushrooms are sun-dried, packed in polythene bags, and marketed in Bhopal and Delhi.

In the case of tasar, a survey indicated that the market for tasar fabric, both domestic and export, has been increasing steadily. At the same time, there is an acute shortage of tasar cocoons, leading to a rise in fabric prices and the import of tasar yarn from China. Thus, the spinning of cocoons into tasar yarn was started in centers in which *adivasis* (indigenous) women worked.

PRADAN established Indian Grameen Services, a Section 25 not-for-profit company, in 1987, for the purpose of engaging in commercial transactions – buying of inputs and selling of output of producers' collectives. This was run by Biswajit Sen, an IIM Ahmedabad graduate.

In each case, however, we found that letting the producers' collectives deal with the markets with some guidance from PRADAN professionals was a better idea than channeling inputs and outputs through IGS. Thus, slowly, IGS was not used. Instead, in Kesla, a producers' organization was set up for broiler farmers, and the Kesla Kukkat Palak Sangh was set up. (In 2021, this had recorded a turnover of INR 6 billion.) For the hide tanners' cooperatives in Barabanki, the market for the intermediately tanned "wet-blue" hides was negotiated with tanneries in Kanpur, 100 km away. For tasar cocoons and yarn, the Masuta Tasar Producers' Company was established. Thereafter, PRADAN adopted producer companies as a modality for organizing the farmers it works with and has done this in numerous locations.

5.2.6 Working with the Government

The fourth approach was working with government development agencies. This is how it began: Under Rajiv Gandhi's guidance, starting in 1985, computers were newly introduced in government departments. For rural development too, computerization was thought of. Mr. Inderjit Khanna, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), who had been a visiting faculty at IIM Ahmedabad

when Vijay was a student there, asked Vijay if PRADAN could do something about this. Vijay inducted Subodh Gupta, an IIT Kharagpur Computer Science graduate, to work on this, and they together produced a software called IRDPLAN. This was widely appreciated, and the MoRD organized multiple workshops in Delhi for all the 400 odd project directors of District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) to see how IRDPLAN could improve their planning and management.

While this was highly appreciated by the MoRD, Vijay felt that the mere installation of software on a computer in a DRDA would not improve the implementation effectiveness of the government's rural development programs. This was when Vijay persuaded Mr. Khanna to consider a proposal for a pilot project in which a PRADAN team would be posted in a district for the planning and management of the government's poverty alleviation programs, initially at the block level and later at the full district. This project was approved and was the first effort of PRADAN to work with the government to improve the effectiveness of the development programs. The project was located at Kishangarh Bas in the Alwar district of Rajasthan.

In the first phase, the PRADAN team tried to improve the planning of the IRDP and build a field data-based computer software package for this. They soon realized the need for linking poor people for credit from banks beyond just the one-shot IRDP loan, which came only to the lucky few. This is when Vijay introduced the team to the concept of self-help groups he had learned at MYRADA, and several SHGs were established in 1987–1988. Indeed, the local Khairtal branch of Punjab National Bank even opened bank accounts for these women and gave them small loans (Mahajan & Navin, 2013).

This approach spread in other PRADAN projects and blossomed in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, under the guidance of Vasimalai, and in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, under the leadership of Narendranath, an IRMA postgraduate. Today, women's SHGs and SHG Federations are an integral part of every PRADAN project. And this work is integrated with the approach of working with the government, using technology, and dealing with markets.

5.3 The Third Phase: Working with Women's SHGs and the Government

PRADAN has been one of the pioneers in promoting self-help groups (SHG) to bring about the economic well-being of the poor, starting with the earliest efforts in Kishangarh Bas (Alwar), Madurai, and Hazaribagh districts in the late 1980s. Initially, women SHG members were seen to play a supportive role in raising family incomes through their savings and credit activities. It is in this context that PRADAN's attempt at women's empowerment through economic activities should be seen (Raghunathan et al., 2019).

5.3.1 Women Empowerment Through Economic Activities

In their first step in making a joint decision to improve family incomes, in 2013, close to 200,000 women made family livelihood plans with their husbands. Their plans had two elements: what the family needed to grow enough to feed the family throughout the year, and how it could earn more money to take care of other needs of the family. By aggregating these aspirations, PRADAN teams at different locations developed livelihood support interventions best suited to individual members. It is possible to identify seven aspects:

- First, by providing agriculture support training through SHG members PRADAN helps bring women in the forefront of agricultural decisions. This gives women their due recognition as farmers in their own right and not just unpaid labor.
- Second, for increased and better-quality yields, PRADAN assists women farmers to get quality seeds and drought-resistant varieties for food crops and cash crops from accredited government and private sources.
- Third, through a range of training (beginner and advanced) in water-conservation cultivation technologies (SRI), integrated natural resource management (INRM), non-pesticidal management (NPM), and organic farming, PRADAN attempts to help improve land and crop productivity.
- Fourth, women's SHGs are able to access funds from government programs and institutions such as Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihood Programme (OTELP), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), and the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) among others.
- Fifth, by encouraging cluster farming, where small farmers with contiguous plots invest in farming inputs together to benefit from economies of scale from sowing and harvesting efforts, PRADAN attempts to make agriculture in small holdings viable.
- Sixth, PRADAN also provides agriculture support linkages by collaborating with various agriculture programs such as Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India (BGREI) which are some important programs of the Government of India's agriculture ministry.

5.3.2 From Economic Activities to Promoting Overall Well-being

But for many poor women, economic considerations are not as important as issues of well-being. It is not unusual for such women to take little interest in savings and credit; they have major health issues to worry about. Anemia was causing more havoc in the lives of these women than low wages. PRADAN's teams noted that discussions on diarrhea, children's ill health, drinking water, and open defecation were surfacing among women at SHG meetings. PRADAN realized that while their agricultural support to SHGs has eliminated starvation and guaranteed

round-the-year food to individual families, this has not automatically translated into nutritional gains for the poor in their project areas.

A baseline study conducted across 12 districts where PRADAN works found that 6 out of 10 people were nutritionally insecure. This was caused by cereal-heavy diets (rice, bajra, and wheat) with occasional vegetables and negligible consumption of high protein. PRADAN initiated pilots with funding from the IKEA Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in eight districts to understand the triggers behind nutritional gains and losses in different ecologies and communities.

Further, PRADAN learned from the findings of a malnutrition survey of India's 106 worst-affected districts conducted by the Nandi Foundation and UNICEF in 2013 that districts with high levels of malnutrition are also those with low levels of sanitation and clean drinking water. PRADAN has therefore added WATSAN (water and sanitation) to its mission, with a pilot underway since 2011 in 36 villages across 9 districts in Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Odisha.

5.4 *The Fourth Phase: Focus on Rights and Justice Through Collaborative Work*

PRADAN's Annual Report 2015–2016 (PRADAN, 2016) marks a departure from its earlier editions. On the very front cover, we come across this statement:

> Our aim is to stimulate the sense of agency of poor communities, especially women's collectives, who being at the bottom of the cross-section of class, caste,[9] and gender, are the most vulnerable.
>
> We are here to transform the human condition in India's villages, to end poverty and discrimination in the poorest and most marginalized regions of the country…Transformation involves restructuring power relationships for the marginalized to have greater control of the development process… experience suggests that the most effective strategy to break this cycle is to create collectives of poor people to work together to confront the unjust arrangements of privilege, access what is due and create their own solutions to live a life of dignity.

The first indicator of the outcomes of PRADAN's new approach was reflected in the number of SHGs formed and women mobilized. In 2015–2016, SHG members themselves proactively mobilized 108,000 women to form 9025 SHGs, marking a 29% annual growth as compared to an average growth of 13% over the previous 4 years. In 2016–2017, the number of SHGs increased exponentially to 46,416 and the number of households with which PRADAN worked directly stood at 588,829, registering a 22% growth over 2015–2016 (PRADAN, 2017). Besides influencing local institutions from the outside, at least 6000 SHG members contested elections

[9] Caste- and gender-based marginalization and discrimination are still prevalent in India, and increasingly management and organization studies literature is engaging with the implications of such marginalization (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Bhatt, 2017, 2022; Chrispal et al., 2021; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2017, 2020, 2022a; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017).

held for the local self-governance institutions across development clusters (PRADAN, 2016). And that's a reasonably good indicator of a power shift.

How has PRADAN translated these statements into action? PRADAN's competencies lay in technical and management aspects of livelihood promotion. But rights? In principle and action, PRADAN has always collaborated with partners, whether for agricultural productivity enhancement or watershed management. Given this tradition, when it came to rights issues, PRADAN turned to collaborators who had the requisite skills and experience. This helped PRADAN scale its impact through an ecosystem approach expanding from livelihood interventions to rights-based issues with regard to women's empowerment ecosystem approach to scaling social impact (Bhatt et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2021; Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c, d).

Thus, with *Jagori*, India's highly regarded women's rights organization, PRADAN rolled out a rights-based gender equality program to enable women's groups to identify and combat age-old practices and biases that are restricting their advancement toward equal rights and opportunities. When women learn to fight against unjust power equations, then demanding that government departments provide them the rights and facilities inherent in government programs related to health, advancement in nutrition, and sanitation conditions is that much easier (Ghatak et al., this volume; Qureshi et al., 2023).

To further promote more collaborative work, PRADAN decided to organize an annual event in the civil society sector called Samagam. This was a three-day event and had hundreds of attendees from other NGOs as well as PRADAN. There were also several invitees from government departments and those engaged in corporate social responsibility divisions of companies or in foundations. Academics and media personnel were also invited. Starting in 2018, this was an annual event, though it was conducted virtually during the COVID pandemic years of 2020 and 2021.

One example of the result of this effort was PRADAN's role in being one of the key members who formed and ran the Rapid Rural Community Response Coalition (RCRC, n.d.) during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the lockdown was hurting the rural poor the most. Migrant laborers and their families in their native villages faced the loss of the livelihoods. It works in 12 states with over six million rural poor households.

6 Conclusion: Relevance of PRADAN Post COVID

It is estimated that 230 million Indians were pushed into poverty due to the COVID-19 pandemic (IANS, 2021). So far as the rural economy was concerned, it faced three types of shocks that PRADAN, by the very nature of its work, was geared to deal with them.

6.1 Dealing with Market-Related Shocks

These manifested in five distinct ways. First, harvesting was delayed due to the non-availability of labor, machinery, transport facilities, and restrictions on movement. Second, farmers of perishable commodities like fruits, vegetables, and flowers had to throw away their produce and incurred losses. Third was the drying up of non-farm and off-farm activities, much-needed additional sources of income. Fourth, labor work under MGNREGS got suspended, leading to a loss of last-resort earnings. Finally, *adivasis* (indigenous) communities usually the most vulnerable in terms of food and nutrition security faced additional burdens. With no collection agents coming and markets closed, they couldn't engage in the collection of non-timber farm produce (NTPF) like tendu leaves and mahua flowers.

The argument that these shocks were due to COVID, of passing nature and unlikely to be faced again, is a specious one in the context of rural poor, simply because they keep facing shocks on a regular basis: poor seed germination, pest attack, drought, flood, poor harvest, and poor market linkage (Qureshi et al., 2018b).

Market-related shocks are best absorbed through the safety net of collective resilience and support such as SHGs, federations, and producer companies – innumerable institutions that PRADAN has promoted across multiple sectors as recorded in this chapter (Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a, b; Kumar et al., this volume; Moolakkattu, this volume). Through these community organizations that it helped build, PRADAN was able to design and implement multi-dimensional interventions in promoting livelihoods and well-being. It has managed to reduce the number of rural households in the lowest income bracket of less than Rupees 40,000 per annum from 18% to 11%. And in rural households in the income bracket of Rupees 100,000 to 300,000 per annum, the figures have gone up from 25% to 30%. These collectives also provide the psychological and emotional support that individuals need in times of crisis, something that transactional relationships with a financial institution or business entity cannot provide.

6.2 Responding to Climate Change

Loss of livelihoods has been further aggravated by climate change, where the agricultural output of poor farmers has been severely impacted by long dry spells as well as sudden bursts of unseasonal rains resulting in flooding and soil erosion (Solanki, this volume; cf. Bansal et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2022). We, therefore, need to distinguish between market-related shocks – whether emanating from COVID (Yu et al., 2021), demonetization (Chodorow-Reich et al., 2020), or financial meltdown – and shocks due to climate change (Aragón et al., 2021), because the responses required are different. For the rural poor, climate change has to be managed at the watershed level. It is here that PRADAN has played a sterling role. Under natural resource management projects, PRADAN has implemented

watershed programs in over 500 villages in India, a feat possibly unmatched by any other NGO in the world. Readers can access the link https://youtu.be/qaG-z9B9LLOw and see how an arid region, where villagers at best survived on subsistence living, turned lush green, yielding multiple crops.

Given PRADAN's predilection and demonstrated capacity to work with collaborators across a wide spectrum, it is in an ideal position to act as a resource organization for natural resource management, especially in watersheds.

6.3 Strengthening Community: The Quintessential Relevance

Perhaps the most significant relevance of PRADAN lies in its role of empowering rural poor women and giving them a sense of agency. We have already noted how PRADAN's rights-based gender equality program motivated at least 6000 SHG members to contest elections for the local self-governance institutions across development clusters. While this is a good indicator of a power shift, these trained rural poor women will go ahead to strengthen community institutions like village and block panchayats which are tasked with economic development, strengthening social justice and implementation of Central and State Government schemes.

The only tribute society can pay to PRADAN for its quintessential role is to help create more PRADANs

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Somnath Ghosh, while a human resource and organization design specialist, has spent significant time working on issues related to the development sector. He retired as Dean (Academics) of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Kashipur, where he also set up the Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Development. Earlier, he also served at other IIMs in Lucknow, Bangalore, and Indore. He was also a visiting fellow at the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University. Currently, he is a Senior Visiting Fellow at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, New Delhi.

Basix Social Enterprise Group: Inclusive Development

Vijay Mahajan and Israr Qureshi

1 Conceptual Background

The contemporary world faces significant challenges, including inequalities, climate change, and pandemics, compounded by the growing income and wealth gap and prevalent greed and consumerism that undermine social order, social justice, and ecological balance (Bansal et al., 2014; Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Bhatt, 2017; Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023, this volume-a; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2017, 2018a, b, 2020, 2022a, 2023, this volume; Riaz, 2015; Sutter et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022). A shift is needed towards sustainable development that prioritizes social welfare and environmental stewardship. Social entrepreneurship, which addresses social and environmental issues using innovative business models, can be a promising direction for change, as social value creation is at its core (Bhatt et al., 2019; Ghatak et al., this volume; Hota et al., 2019; Javeri et al., this volume; Kistruck et al., 2008; Parthiban et al., 2020b; Qureshi et al., 2016; Zainuddin et al., 2022).

As social entrepreneurs are driven by the goals of addressing pressing social and environmental issues, the concept of social entrepreneurship has gained momentum

This Chapter is co-authored by Vijay Mahajan and Israr Qureshi. "I," "We," or "our," in this Chapter, refer to the experiences and thoughts of Vijay Mahajan as a leader (co-founder) of the Basix Social Enterprise Group, or the social enterprise as a collective. Israr Qureshi has integrated these experiences and thoughts with management and organizational studies literature.

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in the past couple of decades (Hota, 2023; Klarin & Suseno, 2023). Social entrepreneurs aim to help communities in the process of commoning by facilitating the creation of discursive spaces, providing technical assistance, and engaging in other forms of capacity building (Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a; Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Qureshi et al., 2023). In addition, social entrepreneurs engage in inclusion work (Hota et al., 2023) to address discrimination, marginalization, and intersectionality (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Bhatt et al., 2022; Ghatak et al., this volume; Pillai et al., 2021a; Qureshi et al., this volume, 2023) and help marginalized groups leverage their capabilities through social intermediation and market linkages (Bhatt et al., 2022, this volume-a, -b; Kistruck et al., 2013a; Qureshi et al., 2022b). They also promote responsible production and consumption by reducing waste and promoting sustainable consumption patterns (Javeri et al., this volume; Parth et al., 2021). Social entrepreneurs structure innovative collaborations and partnerships to tackle the most wicked problems, such as poverty and social exclusion (Bhatt et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021a). They leverage digital technologies while *technoficing* (Hota et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2023; Qiu et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021a, 2022b) to design digital social innovation and increase the breadth and depth of their social impact (Escobedo et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021d). However, it is important to understand social entrepreneurship's philosophical and motivational underpinnings to ensure that it does not get co-opted by neoliberal models of competition, rent-seeking, and profit maximization and remains a promising path for changing the trajectory of development by creating more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable societies.

The Gandhian philosophy and thoughts around self-reliant communities, constructive work, trusteeship, Sarvodaya, Swaraj, Antyodaya, and village-centric development provide foundations for addressing social issues and creating social impact and have inspired many social entrepreneurs in India and around the world (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Bhatt et al., 2013; Ghatak et al., this volume; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Javeri et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Pandey et al., 2021; Mollner, 1984). The notion of constructive work endeavors to foster the self-reliance and resilience of communities through their involvement in innovative activities that result in individual and communal development and challenge inequitable systems and norms to establish a more sustainable and just society (Bhatt et al., 2013, 2022, 2023, this volume-a, b; Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume). Trusteeship, another Gandhian principle (Gandhi, 1942, 1960), recognizes that individual ownership is not absolute but rather a social responsibility (Balakrishnan et al., 2017; Bhatt et al., 2013; Chakrabarty, 2015; Datta & Gailey, 2012; Gopinath, 2005; Hingorani, 1970; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume).

Underpinning the trusteeship is the Gandhian vision of *Sarvodaya* – upliftment of everyone (Gandhi, 1947). Social entrepreneurs, who are driven by the *Sarvodaya* concept, advocate for a society that provides equal access to resources and opportunities to all its members, thereby ensuring that every individual can meet their fundamental needs (Bhatt et al., 2013, 2023; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Kumar

et al., this volume). *Antyodaya* – upliftment of the most marginalized – is essential to achieving this vision, and social entrepreneurs who embrace *Antyodaya* acknowledge that a society's advancement must be evaluated based on the welfare of its most marginalized constituents (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Javeri et al., this volume). To that end, they strive to establish initiatives that help marginalized communities develop critical capabilities and access to essential resources, with the ultimate aim of enhancing their quality of life (Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023; Javeri et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Sutter et al., 2023).

Gandhi's vision of village-centric development is based on the concept of *Antyodaya* (Gandhi, 1947; Javeri et al., this volume; Kumarappa, 1958), and social entrepreneurs who are inspired by this tenet focus on supporting local economies and communities to nurture self-reliant communities, which are characterized by mutually beneficial interdependence, mutual support, and cooperation between community members (Bhatt et al., this volume-a, -b; Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume). The significance of communities taking responsibility for their progress and relying on each other and local resources instead of external institutions or governments is recognized by social entrepreneurs, who leverage these Gandhian principles as an enduring source of inspiration to tackle social concerns and effectuate social change.

This article is written as a reflective narration of the birth, growth, crises, and achievements of the Basix Social Enterprise Group, founded before social enterprise and social entrepreneurship became common in academic circles (Dees, 1998). The narrative begins with a description of the background of the first author and has been written in the first person.

2 Introduction

I founded the Basix Social Enterprise Group in 1996 and was its group CEO for 20 years until 2016. Thus, my ideas, feelings, and actions were intertwined with Basix, as commonly found in social entrepreneurship literature (Asarkaya & Keles Taysir, 2019; Lee & Battilana, 2013). Having been influenced by Gandhian ideas and working with many great Gandhians, this article has been written as a series of "encounters with the truth" and what those led Basix and me to do (Gandhi, 2014). Recognizing the overarching theme of this volume – social enterprises in the post-COVID world – the final section looks into the future and suggests what Basix could do within its livelihood mission and strategy, with some modifications, to address the contemporary and impending developmental challenges.

3 First Encounter with Truth Led to a Life in Development Work

3.1 Move from the Mainstream to an Alternative Pathway

I had some exposure to development and the problem of poverty while studying at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, in 1970–1975, a tumultuous period in India's history. First, the birth of Bangladesh (1970–1971); second, the "Total Revolution" movement launched by JP (Jaya Prakash Narayan, a highly respected Gandhian socialist leader) (Chandra, 2017); and third, the suspension of democratic institutions with the imposition of the Emergency by Indira Gandhi in June 1975 (Prakash, 2019), the month I graduated from the IIT Delhi.

I got a campus placement with Philips, the electronic multinational, as a management trainee. As part of my training, I was posted in Kolkata, put on a sales beat, and had to travel extensively in India's eastern and northeastern provinces. Poverty was palpable in the eastern provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. What I saw made me restless, and I became increasingly unable to reconcile my lifestyle as a young executive in a multinational with a deepening urge to do something about the poverty and inequality surrounding me. To resolve this dilemma, I decided to prepare myself for a career in development work. I joined the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA) for an MBA to learn management skills, economics, and public policy. At the IIMA, I got to work with inspiring professors, including Professor Ravi Mathai, the founder director, who had stepped down and begun a rural development project with Professor Ranjit Gupta. By the time I graduated from the IIMA in 1981, I was sure that development work was what I would do for the rest of my life. I also met my wife, Savita, a classmate at the IIMA, and made many lifelong friends. Thus, my two years at the IIMA were a turning point.

3.2 Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA): A Gandhian NGO

The Bhoodan (land gift to the landless) movement was launched in 1951 by Vinoba Bhave (Sherman, 2016), one of the foremost disciples of Mahatma Gandhi, as a non-violent alternative to the violent land struggles that had started in several parts of the country by then. By walking from village to village incessantly for 14 years, Vinoba had collected over 4.2 million acres of land-gift promises from landlords and big farmers. Unfortunately, much of the gifted land was usually of poor quality, rocky, and undulating, with no irrigation, and thus unfit for farming without further investment on it. Thus, most of the Bhoodan land allottees worked as landless laborers for years after getting the land gift.

By 1969, Gandhiji's birth centenary, many Gandhians felt that something must be done to correct this situation. In Tamil Nadu, a southern province in India, the

Sarvodaya Mandal (forum for the welfare of all), under the leadership of Gandhian leader S Jagannathan, decided to start a project for settling Bhoodan recipients on their land by digging wells, providing land, and providing plough bullocks, seeds, and fertilizers. The first such "Sarva Seva Farm" was set up in the Sevalur village of Madurai district by his young follower, Subbaiah Loganathan. By 1979, Loganathan set up dozens of Sarva Seva Farms all over Tamil Nadu (Ashta, 2014; Kumar et al., this volume; Rigby, 1985). Many Gandhians from central and northern provinces in India, like Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, requested Loganathan to start Sarva Seva Farms in their respective provinces. Therefore, in 1979, an NGO was registered, the Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA), to work with landless people all over India who had been given some Bhoodan land (Jayasooria, 2015; Kumar et al., this volume).

ASSEFA sets up projects by bringing together the allottees who were given land in a consolidated parcel, motivating them to work on it, installing irrigation through dug or borewells, leveling the land, and getting seeds, fertilizers, and plow bullocks for starting cultivation. The funding for these activities came from donors, mostly from abroad, through the efforts of a retired Italian professor, Giovanni Ermiglia, who was devoted to Gandhian social work (Kumar et al., this volume; Prasad, 2009). In addition, ASSEFA also managed to raise some bank loans for land development, irrigation, and crop inputs, collectively in the name of farmers.

Soon after graduating from the IIMA, I began working with FAIR, an organization set up by Dr. NCB Nath, a visiting professor at the IIMA who was advising various rural development agencies. During that period, I met Deep Joshi, then a young, MIT-educated program officer of the Ford Foundation. Deep told me about ASSEFA and how it struggled with its development projects in Bihar and was looking for someone to manage them. Deep put me in touch with Loganathan of ASSEFA, and after an initial conversation, we both traveled to Bihar to see the ASSEFA projects there.

At the end of the visit, I decided to work there, as it fulfilled my urge to work to promote the livelihoods of very poor people. I started living in Matihani village, about 20 km from Gaya, the district town. The mud hut I lived in had no electricity or running water, and the roof leaked when it rained. It was in a tola (hamlet) of Bhoodan allottees who were Musahars, who are seen at the very bottom of the caste hierarchy. I used to go in the fields to ease myself in the mornings, bathe, and wash clothes in the only hand pump everyone used.

I began by surveying the land, leveling it, and locating the points for drilling borewells or installing small lift irrigation pumps from little streams. In six months, crop cultivation started, but the yields were poor. By the end of three years, however, the landless families had started growing enough paddy, pulses, and vegetables to feed themselves and earn some cash income. Kids started going to school, and the women and men had more than one dress and some household utensils. The project transformed their lives… and mine! By then, my work in ASSEFA had spread to nine districts in three states.

3.3 Professional Assistance for Development Action: PRADAN

Based on my experience with ASSEFA in its Bihar projects, I felt that many other NGOs working with the poor could also benefit from technical and management assistance from young professionals like me (Chowdhury & Willmott, 2019; Dill, 2014; Kojima et al., 2012; McKinnon, 2007; Mitchell, 2015; Suykens et al., 2020). Deep Joshi was also of the same view. In order to attract a more significant number of professionals to work in development and NGOs beyond ASSEFA, with the conceptual, moral, and material support of Deep and Loganathan, I decided to set up an NGO called Professional Assistance for Development Action, or PRADAN (which in Hindi means to give in return, as against DAN, which means to give in charity).

PRADAN began in 1983 by recruiting and placing young professionals to work with NGOs in field locations (Ghosh, 2013; Noponen, 2003; Venkataraman et al., 2016). Within a couple of years, we, the PRADAN team, also started a development project of our own, working directly with landless *adivasi* (indigenous) groups in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh, helping them to start backyard poultry farms and the cultivation of paddy straw mushrooms. Deep joined PRADAN in 1986 (Ghosh, 2013).

3.4 Second Encounter with Truth Led to the Setting Up of Basix

While both ASSEFA and PRADAN managed to persuade banks to give loans to the poor for livelihood promotion, I witnessed the problems faced by poor rural households in getting loans from banks. Even after loans were disbursed, the poor faced many other problems, including a lack of technical and business skills, infrastructure and risk coverage, and missing input and output linkages (Brigg, 2001; Ganle et al., 2015; Gutierrez-Nieto et al., 2007; Kistruck et al., 2013a). Progress was limited.[1] I wanted to set up an entity that could make a larger impact

[1] Scaling a social enterprise model is challenging. The literature on social entrepreneurship has identified various approaches to scaling a social venture (Smith & Stevens, 2010). However, scaling the social enterprise rather than the social innovation may not always be practical or sustainable due to the associated costs and agency-related issues (André & Pache, 2016); Cannatelli, 2017; Grimes et al., 2020). In fact, quick scaling of a social enterprise, at times, has resulted in it drifting away from its social mission (Chell et al., 2016; Grimes et al., 2019; Ometto et al., 2019). The literature has broadly identified six approaches to scaling social impact, including scaling by diversification, scaling up, scaling across, scaling deep, ecosystem approach, and scaling by bridging complementary institutional voids (Qureshi et al., 2021d, p 655–657). Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses, and social entrepreneurs need to consider various factors such as market linkages and the open and emergent nature of innovations for the base-of-the-pyramid population. Additionally, social entrepreneurs need to engage in intensive learning and strategic drift to achieve scalable adaptive innovation (Foster & Heeks, 2013; Parthiban et al., 2021). Scaling

by attracting mainstream finance and also work on policy change. Thus, I left PRADAN in 1991.

I worked for five years as an independent researcher. During this period, I led a nationwide study on the rural non-farm sector, sponsored by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). This gave me a deep understanding of the problems microenterprises and small enterprises faced, not just in accessing credit but also in managing risk and building market linkages[2] (Mahajan & Dichter, 1990; Bauchet & Morduch, 2013; Bhatt et al., 2022; Hota et al., 2019). Another study, sponsored by the Ford Foundation, enabled me to study the functioning of the SEWA Bank in Ahmedabad, the Grameen Bank and BRAC in Bangladesh, the Bank Rakyat Indonesia, and the Shorebank Group in the USA (Mahajan, 1999). At the end of these two studies over four years, I set about to design Basix as a "new generation livelihood promotion institution," the sub-title of the feasibility study to establish Basix.

3.5 *Basix Mission Focus on the Poor: Antyodaya*

More than a decade of experience in the development sector convinced me to focus on the most marginalized social groups (Bhatt, 2017, 2022; Qureshi et al., 2018b; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017), who are excluded from the development processes and markets (Bhatt et al., 2022; Hota et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., 2022b, 2023; Sutter et al., 2023). That objective aligned well with the Gandhian philosophy of *Antyodaya* (Gandhi, 1966; Reddy, 1988; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Javeri et al., this volume). Based on the work done over the previous five years, I articulated the mission of Basix as

social impact is a complex process that requires careful consideration of various factors (Dees et al., 2004). Social entrepreneurs need to identify the appropriate scaling approach that aligns with their mission and leverages partnerships to achieve their goals effectively (Qureshi et al., 2021d).

[2] In the context of social entrepreneurship, market linkages refer to the connections and relationships that social enterprises establish with market actors, such as suppliers, buyers, distributors, and investors, to facilitate marginalized and rural communities' access to markets and enhance the value chains of their products or services (Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, 2021). Market linkages are important for rural and marginalized communities, as they provide access to markets, increase income opportunities, and improve the overall economic sustainability of these communities. Many of these activities invariably require the development of capabilities so that marginalized communities can eventually be able to transact in the market directly (Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a; Hota et al., this volume; Sutter et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., this volume, 2023). Thus, the objective of capability development and eventual self-disintermediation by the intermediary differentiates social intermediaries from a commercial intermediary (Kistruck et al., 2013a; Pillai et al., 2021b; Qureshi et al., 2021b,c, 2022b).

> To promote a large number of sustainable livelihoods, including for the rural poor and women, through the provision of financial services and technical assistance in an integrated manner. BASIX will strive to yield a competitive rate of return to its investors so as to be able to access mainstream capital and human resources on a continuous basis.

This was the result of my view that, to scale up, Basix had to be financially sustainable. The original projections were to work with at least one million poor households. As there were about 100 million poor households in India in the mid-1990s, I used to say that "it will need a hundred Basix to address the livelihood issue in India." Thus, one of the aims of Basix was to build a livelihood promotion sector and a whole supportive ecosystem for it. Thus, Basix was a visionary organization that could foresee the benefit of the ecosystem approach to scaling social impact (Bhatt et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021d).

3.6 Basix Corporate Structure: Trusteeship

I asked Bharti Gupta Ramola, a batchmate of mine from the IIMA, who was a senior financial sector expert at Pricewaterhouse Coopers, and Deep Joshi to be the cofounders of BASIX. Because Indian income-tax regulations do not permit a nonprofit organization to engage in financing activities, we needed to establish a for-profit finance company. To do this, we first established a holding company in 1996 with our capital contributions of INR 1.1 million (US$ 32,000 at the 1996 rate), a very substantial sum for us then.

As the holding company had to have financial sector subsidiaries, which had to be for-profit to be able to attract capital, the holding company could not be a nonprofit company. This is because income-tax regulations do not permit a non-profit company to invest in a for-profit company. Thus, the holding company had to be a for-profit company. But we were setting it up for a public purpose, not personal gain. To overcome this difficulty, we, the founders, decided to eschew any returns on our investment since inception. This was a clear signal that BASIX as a group was devoted to the tenets of social entrepreneurship and dedicated to helping the marginalized in resource-constrained environments (Bhatt et al., 2019; Hota et al., 2019; Kistruck et al., 2013a; Qureshi et al., 2016).

In 25 years from 1996 to 2021, no dividend has ever been paid to the Basix founder investors. Further, we have signed an irrevocable deed to pledge that any income from sale proceeds of any shares under any circumstances shall be given as donation to non-profit organizations, namely PRADAN, Indian Grameen Services, and the Institute for Livelihood Training and Research. In this manner, we have implemented in a practical way the Gandhian idea of trusteeship, where we manage resources for the benefit of society and not for personal gain (cf. Balakrishnan et al., 2017; Bhatt et al., this volume-a, -b; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume).

The holding company was Bhartiya Samruddhi Investments and Consulting Services Ltd. (BASICS Ltd.). The initial corporate structure in 1996 was inspired by the Shorebank Group, USA. The holding company had two subsidiaries:

- Bhartiya Samruddhi Finance Limited (BSFL), a non-bank finance company (NBFC) registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), gives loans to rural farms and non-farm enterprises, and Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd. (SNFL) gives smaller loans to landless poor and women through SHGs.
- Indian Grameen Services, IGS, was a non-profit Section 25 company to provide training, technical assistance, and support services to borrowers of BSFL and SNFL and to try out development innovations for addressing the livelihood challenges of the poor.

3.7 Basix Strategy: Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods for the Poor

I had been doing a strategic plan for the Sir Ratan Tata Trust in 1995, and at the end of that exercise, I asked them to support the idea of Basix by giving a loan of INR 10 million to IGS. The Tata Trust approved the loan in May 1996 to test out the microfinance model even before BSFL and SNFL were registered.

With these funds, following the *Antyodaya* principle, Basix decided to start microcredit operations in three contiguous poor districts: Raichur in northern Karnataka and Mehboobnagar and Kurnool in the Rayalseema region of Andhra Pradesh. Raichur was the poorest district in Karnataka, and Mehboobnagar was the poorest in AP. Both these districts were known as “labor districts,” as a large number of landless workers and small farmers used to migrate to cities for work after the monsoon season harvest (Dodd et al., 2017; Bates, 1985; Haribabu, 1984). The first Basix loans were given on June 6, 1996, to women’s self-help groups (SHGs) established by Prerana, an NGO established by a former PRADAN colleague, Pramod Kulkarni, who was also a batchmate from the IIM Ahmedabad. A field office was established in Raichur town, and lending began to small farmers as well as non-farm microenterprises. By the end of the year, IGS had disbursed over INR 17 million, including funds it managed to borrow from the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) for non-farm loans and ITC Agrotech (for farmers). Apart from loans to poor women through SHGs and to small and marginal farmers for crop cultivation and to diversify into dairy, poultry, sheep, and goat rearing, Basix also gave loans for non-farm microenterprises engaged in household food processing, making ready-to-eat savories, handloom weaving and apparel making, leather goods, handicrafts, wood and metal processing, repairs of vehicles and electrical appliances, small provision stores, roadside tea stalls, eating places, and transport services. This was Basix’s initial foray into providing an opportunity for the marginalized to earn a livelihood (Mahajan, 1994).

4 Third Encounter with Truth Led to Moving from Microcredit to Livelihood Promotion

4.1 Growth of Basix as a Microcredit Institution

During 1996, we negotiated loans from the Ford Foundation and the SDC to BASICS Ltd., adding up to INR 150 million (US$ 4.4 million at the 1996 exchange rate). This was down-streamed to BSFL for offering loans for agriculture (crop cultivation, irrigation, and land development), allied activities (dairy, sheep and goats, poultry, and fisheries), and non-farm enterprises (grocery shops, artisans, tailoring, mobile vendors, etc.). The loans of BSFL ranged from INR 10,000 to INR 25,000. SNFL began giving bulk loans for on-lending by SHGs, whose loans to individuals were INR 3000–10,000.

To start the work of Basix, I turned to people I had worked with previously. Parthasarathy, a banker, was involved with the rural non-farm sector study, so I asked him to join as head of operations. Vijay Kulkarni, another banker, agreed to start the first branch in Raichur. Dr. Sankar Datta, a former PRADAN colleague who had moved to the Institute for Rural Management Anand (IRMA) as a faculty member, joined Basix. A little later, Prof MS Sriram, a professor of finance at IRMA, joined Basix for two years on a sabbatical and helped mobilize finance. Also joining the early team were Sattaiah Devarkonda, who took over as the CEO of Basix in 2017, and Mohan Raj Bhagirathi, the Group CFO since 2017.

To meet our growing need for lending funds, Sriram and I went to international development lenders such as CordAid and Bilance in the Netherlands and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and managed to raise loans from them. It was only in 1999 that BSFL successfully raised its first commercial loans from a bank – the Global Trust Bank gave INR 5 million (US$ 116,000 at the 1999 exchange rate). Being an NBFC, BSFL had to maintain at least a 10% capital adequacy ratio, which meant it had to raise equity capital. It took two years of going around the world before it eventually fructified into the first equity investment in an MFI in India, from the World Bank's private sector arm, the IFC, the Shorebank, USA, the Hivos Triodos Fund, Netherlands, and from the ICICI and the HDFC in India.

By March 1999, the loan portfolio had crossed INR 100 million (US$ 2.32 million at the 1999 exchange rate), with an average loan of INR 12,000 in over 300 villages in six districts. The repayment rates were in the range of 97%, which drew wide attention and often incredulity from bankers, who were struggling with repayment rates of 30–60% on loans to similar borrowers. By 1999, Basix was beginning to acquire a reputation as a pioneering microfinance institution that seemed to have cracked the problem of lending to the poor and doing so sustainably. Many bankers and policymakers visited the Basix operations and were convinced that the model was working. Still, Basix was not able to raise any loans from Indian public sector banks as they were not clear how they could use an NBFC to give loans to the poor (Mahajan et al., 2000). Basix advocated with the RBI, and the RBI issued new

guidelines in 2000, enabling bank lending to MFIs. The sector was all set for growth then. The next problem Basix cracked was raising equity capital to underpin the borrowings from banks. This happened in 2001, with equity from the IFC, Shorebank, Triodos, ICICI, and HDFC.[3]

4.2 Impact Assessment Showed Microcredit Was Not Enough for Livelihood Promotion

In 2002, Basix embarked on an OLÉ – Organisational Learning and Evolution review exercise. This was intended to evaluate the work done in the first five years and build a roadmap for the future. It was a 360-degree review of Basix's work involving various stakeholders, including customers, staff, collaborators, investors, bankers, board members, and competitors. One of the components was a survey of Basix borrowers of five years standing. To our surprise, only 52% of Basix microcredit clients reported a significant (more than 10%) increase in income over the years, 23% reported no change, while a staggering 25% reported a decline in incomes, compared to a control group of non-borrowers.

The Basix team studied this and identified three main reasons for needing more than microcredit alone. Most microcredit borrowers (a) suffered from low productivity in whatever economic activity they pursued, (b) faced many unmanaged risks to their lives and livelihoods, and (c) had to buy inputs at higher prices while getting low prices for their produce. This set the stage for a major overhaul of strategy. After wide consultations and further deliberations, I came up with a new strategy – the Livelihood Triad (Mahajan, 2005; Mahajan & Singh, 2022). The idea behind the Livelihood Triad strategy is to provide a comprehensive set of livelihood promotion services to poor rural households. This includes the provision of financial services for their lives and livelihoods; agricultural, livestock, and enterprise development services for their economic activity; and institutional development services for organizing them as producers (Datta et al., 2004).

[3] Social enterprises face multiple challenges in securing financing for their initiatives, as potential investors are often hesitant due to perceived low returns on investment and the risk of mission drift. Furthermore, ambiguity around the legal status of social enterprises in many countries forces them to register as for-profit companies to access funding from the market. Traditional forms of financing are inadequate and transactional, necessitating innovative instruments such as social impact investment, which combines financial and social/environmental impact (Kickul & Lyons, 2015). However, this presents the challenge of increased pressure to measure and monetize social impact, which can be particularly difficult for smaller and emerging social enterprises. Social entrepreneurs should look for social investors who are willing to take risk and invest in smaller, emerging social enterprises that lack collateral and track record. Specialist social investment lenders should aim to provide finance for earlier-stage social enterprise development rather than competing with commercial banks (Bugg-Levine et al., 2012; Lyon & Owen, 2019).

4.3 *New Livelihood Triad Strategy*

The rationale behind the Livelihood Triad strategy, as shown in Fig. 1, was as follows: Microcredit by itself is helpful for the more enterprising poor people in economically dynamic areas. Less enterprising poor households need to start with savings and insurance before they can benefit from microcredit because they need to manage risk. These together constitute inclusive financial services (IFS). In less developed regions, poor people, in addition to inclusive financial services, need a whole range of Agricultural, Livestock, and Enterprise Development (AGLED) services, such as input supply, training, technical assistance, and market linkages. Poor households needed to be organized into informal or formal groups to offer these services cost-effectively. Forming such groups and making them function effectively requires Human Resource and Institutional Development Services (HR&IDS). Hence the Livelihood Triad. This diversification of services was necessary to provide holistic support to rural communities (Bhatt et al., 2013, 2022; Kistruck et al., 2013b; Parthiban et al., 2020b).

4.3.1 Inclusive Financial Services (IFS)

Basix was always aware of the role of savings in the lives of the poor and thus encouraged savings in self-help groups. Based on Basix's policy advocacy work, the RBI announced the formation of a new category of private sector banks called Local Area Banks (LABs) to serve underserved rural customers. Basix was one of the first recipients of a LAB license to establish the Krishna Bhima Samruddhi (KBS) LAB in late 2000. The bank was named after the two rivers flowing through the three districts in which it worked: Raichur and Gulbarga in Karnataka and Mahabubnagar in AP.

Through KBS Bank, Basix could offer unbanked customers savings and other banking services. KBS Bank also began offering savings deposit and withdrawal services from off-branch locations. This became the precursor for the banking agent/correspondent (BC) model approved by the RBI a few years later (Mahajan, 2008; Sakariya, 2013; Srinivasan, 2010). To help customers manage the risks to their lives and livelihoods, Basix began offering life and health insurance, crop, livestock, and non-farm enterprise asset insurance, with BSFL acting as a corporate agent of insurance companies. These were important steps in mitigating the risk

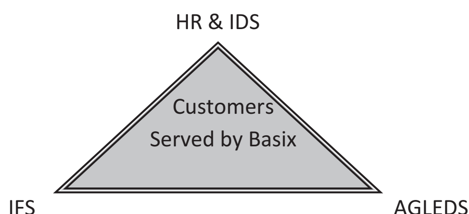

Fig. 1 New Livelihood Triad Strategy

marginalized people face in a resource-constrained environment and involved several social and ethical quandaries (Aiyar & Venugopal, 2020; Bhatt, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023, this volume-a; Hota et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., this volume; 2023; Sutter et al., 2023).

4.3.2 Agricultural, Livestock and Enterprise Development (AGLED) Services

Basix supported farmers for specific crops – paddy, soybean, groundnut, cotton, pulses, and vegetables, mainly potato and onion – for intensive interventions in improving productivity by increasing yields and reducing input costs per acre. These techniques were picked up from agricultural research institutions in the respective regions. For livestock activities, dairy, poultry, and fishery sub-sectors were chosen, and improved practices developed by livestock research institutions from the respective regions were picked up for an extension. BASIX conducted health checks on animals and vaccinated and dewormed them. It trained customers on feed and fodder and better dairying practices. Dairy farmers were linked to milk marketing chains of cooperatives or private dairy companies. For non-farm enterprises such as handlooms, apparel making, and handicrafts, Basix provided skill and design upgradation and linked producers in clusters with input suppliers and output buyers on better terms. Thus, by helping develop capabilities and creating market linkages, Basix initiated a process of inclusive development and inclusive markets (Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023, this volume-a; Qureshi et al., 2022b, this volume, 2023; Sutter et al., 2023).

4.3.3 Human Resources and Institutional Development Services (HR & IDS)

We have organized Basix quarterly reviews (BQRs) almost since inception, where people interested in microfinance and livelihood promotion were invited for training and exposure visits. This led to many new MFIs being established. Basix established an HR training division called the Basix Academy for Livelihood and Microfinance Promotion (B-A-LAMP) to train its staff as well as for the sector, which was a reflection of Basix's commitment to an ecosystem approach to scaling impact (Bhatt et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021d). Institutional Development Services began with promoting self-help groups (SHGs) among women to promote savings and credit for livelihood activities. By 2005, Basix had organized thousands of SHGs and SHG Federations and provided capacity-building support to them. Subsequently, Basix organized hundreds of Farmers' Producer Companies (FPCs) for farmers.

5 The Fourth Encounter with Truth Led to Recognizing the Dark Side of Microcredit

5.1 Not All Was Well with the Microcredit Institutions

Despite successfully developing an integrated livelihood promotion model and demonstrating its sustainability, BSFL needed help raising capital to fuel its growth. This was because, between 2003 and 2008, it had yielded its place as the top MFI to several newcomers who were solely focused on microcredit (Kalpana, 2005; Sarkar, 2008; Swaminathan, 2007). By 2005, many other MFIs had started (Basu & Srivastava, 2005; Karmakar, 2008). By 2009, there was a rapid growth of other MFIs, and concerns around their lending practices started cropping up (Gonzalez, 2010; Reno-Weber, 2009).

Sajeev Vishwanathan was appointed as the CEO of BSFL in October 2009 to lead the company to the next phase. Sajeev was instrumental in attracting two rounds of equity totaling INR 1600 million (USD 34.8 million at the 2009 exchange rate) from various social impact and private equity investors. This paved the way for BSFL to grow faster. As of September 2010, the company served 1.8 million customers with microcredit worth INR 18,080 million (USD 401.8 million at the 2010 exchange rate) with less than 1% NPAs. BSFL had over 10,000 employees across 20 states and 300 district offices. I continued as CEO of the Basix Group and used the holding company to explore new ways to realize the Livelihood Triad strategy. This was largely facilitated by the INR 100 million (USD 2.1 million at the 2010 exchange rate) Livelihood Triad Fund given by the Swiss SDC to IGS. Over 75 new ideas were tested to promote a large number of livelihoods for the poor and women.

Many newer MFIs were keen to do anything for growth, including poaching customers and offering multiple loans (Guha & Chowdhury, 2013; McIntosh & Wydick, 2005). When the customers who had overborrowed were not able to repay, these MFIs engaged in coercive collection practices to show that their repayment track record was good (Galema et al., 2012; Taylor, 2011; Young, 2010). In many cases, field staff and fellow borrowers from joint liability groups misbehaved with borrowers who were not able to repay. In some cases, this led to such borrowers running away from their homes and, in a few cases, even committing suicide (Beg & Bashir, 2017; Taylor, 2011). When news of coercive collections and borrower suicides spread, this caused widespread resentment.

To take corrective action, I helped establish the Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN) and was elected as its first president in 2009 (see more on MFIN, Ashta, 2014; Mader, 2013; Sriram, 2012). MFIN was set up as a self-regulatory organization of all NBFC-MFIs in India. MFIN acted quickly and rolled out a code of conduct to prevent an MFI from giving a loan to a borrower who already had two loans or a loan outstanding of INR 50,000. MFIN also set up a coordination committee of MFIs with the Andhra Pradesh government, which was agitated that MFIs were giving loans to women from SHGs who already had loans from public sector banks.

However, a highly successful initial public offer of shares by SKS Microfinance in August 2010 led many people to believe that the MFIs had become money-spinning machines rather than serving the poor (Grunewald & Baron, 2011; Mader, 2013; Nair, 2010). In October 2010, the Andhra Pradesh (AP) government passed a law as a reaction to the alleged involvement of MFIs in borrowers committing suicide in the state. This ordinance, which soon became the AP Microfinance Institutions (Regulation and Moneylending) Act 2010, virtually spelled a death knell to MFIs in the state (Sriram, 2010). The impact of this act has been different for various social groups, with marginalized groups affected disproportionately more (Saxena et al., 2020).

5.2 Policy Advocacy and Sector Building

Let me backtrack a bit to give context to how I tried to handle this big crisis the microfinance sector faced in 2010. Right since the inception of Basix, I have tried to build a supportive ecosystem for the microfinance sector. For this, the normal modality was to serve as a member of a working group or committee established by the Finance Ministry, the RBI, and other associated organizations.

In 1996, I served on an RBI working group whose recommendations enabled banks to open bank accounts for SHGs and massively increased bank credit to SHG, for on-lending to poor women. In 1998, I conducted a study for the DFID-UK to establish an SHG capacity-building institution – the Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS) (Mahajan & Ramola, 2003; Reddy & Manak, 2005). In 1999, under the leadership of Elaben Bhatt of SEWA, we established Sa-Dhan, an association of community development financial institutions, and persuaded the RBI Governor, Dr. Bimal Jalan, to establish a task force on microfinance (Harper, 2002; Mahajan, 2008). I served as one of its members. Its report became a guidebook for the growth of the sector since 2000.

In 2003, I was asked to join as a member of the Advisory Committee of the INR 1000 million (USD 21.7 million at the 2003 exchange rate) National Microfinance Equity Fund, which was managed by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). In 2005, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) made me a part-time member for five years. In 2007, I served on the Rangarajan Committee on Financial Inclusion, three of whose recommendations were: opening a bank account for every adult, setting up an INR 5000 million Financial Inclusion Fund and a separate INR 5000 million Financial Inclusion Technology Fund (USD 125 million at the 2007 exchange rate). In 2008, I served as a member of the Raghuram Rajan Committee on Financial Sector Reforms. Here I was able to seed the idea of small finance banks. This policy recommendation eventually became a reality when Raghuram Rajan became the Governor of the RBI and nine top MFIs were given licenses to become small finance banks.

By October 2010, the microfinance sector's image changed from benevolent lenders to the poor to exploitative, high rates charging coercive recoveries-driven institutions. To restore the sector's credibility, we worked with the RBI-appointed Malegam Committee, explained the code of conduct of MFIN, and how we established a credit bureau to ensure that no violations of the code took place, either while giving the loans or while recovering them.

Due to my credibility in the policy forums, I could speak to the media, including senior journalists like Tamal Bandopadhyay, Swaminathan Aiyer, and Latha Venkatesh. I met the then RBI Governor, Dr. D. Subbarao; the Chief Economic Advisor, Dr. Kaushik Basu; the Banking Secretary, Mr. R. Gopalan; and finally, the Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee. I explained to them that, though there were a few rotten eggs, on the whole, the microfinance sector was doing good for India's poor. The Finance Minister agreed with this and issued a statement: "Microfinance sector requires regulation, not strangulation," which finally turned the tide, and the positive cycle started in 2012 (Ghosh, 2013).

5.3 Shodh Yatra in 2011: To Find the Truth by Meeting the People

In October 2010, the Andhra Pradesh (AP) Government Ordinance prevented MFIs in the state from collecting the loans they had given. As a result, portfolio quality started deteriorating for all AP-based MFIs, and debt capital from banks dried up overnight. The total outstanding microcredit loan for all MFIs in AP was around INR 70 billion in October 2010 (USD 1.6 billion at the 2010 exchange rate), and over the next few months, most of this became uncollectible. BSFL was one of the most adversely affected parties, as more than 30% of its loan portfolio was in AP. As an introspective response, I decided to go on a Shodh Yatra (journey of search) to have a dialogue with the people and understand their livelihood situation. This is what I wrote in a blog the day before the Shodh Yatra began on January 30, 2011:

> Just emerging raw from the microfinance crisis. A field which was received a Nobel Prize for one of its pioneers, Dr Mohammed Yunus and was widely praised till a year ago is now widely condemned – by people like Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina, and the former Reserve Bank of India Governor Dr YV Reddy. What is real? The earlier assessment or the current one? What is real is what the people say. That is why this Shodh Yatra. An exploration of truth. It is a hybrid yatra – I will walk while in a village or a town, stopping by every once in a while to have a dialogue; and drive between habitations. I intend to do this for 80 days over a period of January 30, 2011 (today) till April 18, 2011. The beginning date and place are significant to me – today is Gandhiji's martyrdom day and I am starting from his Ashram

> in Sevagram, Wardha; near Nagpur in Central India. I hope to end on April 18, which is the day Vinoba Bhave launched the Bhoodan movement at Pochampally, Telangana. My Yatra will end in Pochampally.[4]

Soon after I returned from the Yatra, the BSFL CEO left, and I was back in the harness. As loan repayments by micro-credit borrowers had stopped in AP in the wake of the AP MFI Act, BSFL had unrecovered loans of nearly INR 6 billion (USD 171.4 million at the 2010 exchange rate) out of its total loan portfolio of about INR 18 billion (USD 514.3 million at the 2010 exchange rate). These were mostly in AP and neighboring districts of states like Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Odisha. BSFL had borrowed most of this money from about 25 different banks. Over the next two years, BSFL repaid INR 12 billion (USD 342.9 million at the 2010 exchange rate) to banks by collecting its loans outstanding in states other than AP. For the rest, I negotiated a Corporate Debt Restructuring (CDR) deal with the banks. It took five years to complete this settlement, and though it was an honorable exit, it was at a huge cost. BSFL, which was once rated as one of the world's 10 best MFIs in 2010, was left with no significant assets, borrowers, or employees by September 2016, when I retired from the Basix Social Enterprise Group. But the story does not end here, as thanks to the diversification from microcredit to livelihoods since 2003, there was much more to Basix than just BSFL. I used the BSFL crisis period between 2011 and 2016 to grow these other entities in the Basix Group. This is described in the next section.

6 Fifth Encounter with Truth Led to Reaffirming the Livelihood Mission

By early 2011, it was clear that the microcredit sector was going through a phase where it was best for Basix to focus its energies on the wider mission of livelihood promotion for the poor, for which the Livelihood Triad strategy had been crafted and tested between 2003 and 2006. By 2010, Basix had over 600,000 fee-paying customers for AGLED Services, and it earned over INR 250 million (USD 5.6 million at the 2010 exchange rate) from this vertical. The only glitch was that these households were being reached through BSFL, the microcredit vehicle, which was impaired. Thus, I decided to establish a number of different entities to pursue the three vertices of the Livelihood Triad, which is referred to in the literature as a diversification strategy (Kistruck et al., 2013b) and an ecosystem approach (Bhatt et al., 2021).

[4] The Yatra attracted a lot of attention around India as well as from the microfinance community around the world. CGAP, the World Bank's microfinance think-tank, sent out a team to make a video film on the Yatra. The link to the CGAP video of Yatra is https://youtu.be/I0N72acSYjo

6.1 Inclusive Financial Services

For inclusive financial services, having a savings bank account serves as a gateway to financial inclusion. Having a bank account also enables the poor to receive funds from their family members working in cities and from various government schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), wages (Fischer & Ali, 2019), and old-age pensions (Unnikrishnan & Imai, 2020). Basix had seen the power of savings bank accounts at its KBS Local Area Bank. Basix advocated for a policy to enable poor people to open bank accounts and operate them from outlets other than bank branches. By 2007, the RBI had established the business correspondent (BC) model to enable wider access to banking (Mahajan, 2008; Sakariya, 2013; Srinivasan, 2010). Basix pioneered this model in 2008 with the Axis Bank, marking the beginning of a new era of digital financial services.

6.1.1 Basix Sub-K i-Transactions Ltd.

By 2010, we decided to establish a financial inclusion services company, Sub-K i-Transactions Ltd. *Sub-K* means "for all" in Hindi and below 1000 in English, enabling micro-transactions of less than INR 1000; access points less than 1000 meters away at a cost of less than 1000 paise (INR 10). In search of talent, I persuaded Amit Mehta of Tata Consulting Services and some of his colleagues to join Sub-K. They built a mobile technology platform that could integrate with the core banking systems of banks for real-time transactions. Sub-K established BC partnerships with KBS Bank, Syndicate Bank, and Axis Bank. Basics Ltd. put in some initial equity, and we raised equity capital from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF) in 2012.

Amit Mehta moved on from Sub-K after the start-up phase, and we appointed Sattaiah Devarkonda, a Basix veteran since 1996, as the CEO of Sub-K. Under his leadership, the microcredit distribution relationship with the Ratnakar (later renamed RBL) Bank was established, and the existing relationships with Syndicate Bank and Axis Bank were strengthened. Sub-K then built a nationwide BC network with these and other banks.

By 2021, under the leadership of TN Sasidhar, CEO since 2016, Sub-K had served more than two million customers through 12 bank partnerships and over 7000 BC outlets all over India. It managed a loan portfolio of over INR 12,000 million (USD 162.2 million at the 2021 exchange rate). Sub-K also pioneered banking services through Common Service Centres (CSCs), which were established to offer e-governance services.

6.1.2 Basix Micro Insurance Services

Over the years, to help its microcredit customers manage the various risks to their lives and livelihoods, Basix introduced several insurance products, which it designed and offered jointly with insurance companies. The first was life insurance for each borrower and spouse, which covered the borrower to the extent of the loan they had taken in case of death. The next was health insurance, which gave out a cash amount in case of hospitalization. Basix also offered crop insurance to farmers for different crops and in different agro-climatic zones based on the rainfall index. Livestock insurance was provided for dairy animals. For non-farm microenterprises, asset insurance was offered against theft, fire, etc. The insurance practice of Basix became quite large, covering over four million clients for risks of various kinds – life, health, crop, livestock, and non-farm assets. As its distribution was through BSFL, it suffered a setback after 2013.

6.2 Agricultural, Livestock and Enterprise Development Services

6.2.1 Basix Krishi Samruddhi Ltd. (BKSL)

The work done on the AGLED services under the livelihood triad was also hived off from BSFL and re-launched into a separate company, Basix Krishi Samruddhi Ltd. (BKSL). The early stage equity investment was arranged through the Acumen Fund. Initially, BKSL offered the agricultural and livestock services developed in the early stages of the Livelihood Triad. This included seed production and supply to potato farmers in West Bengal, fish farmers in Bihar, and mushroom farmers in Odisha. BKSL also provided marketing assistance to soybean and onion farmers in MP, pulses farmers in Rajasthan, and ginger and horticulture farmers in the northeastern states of Manipur and Nagaland. Later, BKSL became engaged in organizing farmers into Producers' Companies (FPOs) and facilitating the bulk purchase of agricultural inputs and procurement of produce from farmers for bulk sales to buyers such as agro-processors. By 2021, BKSL, led by Tapas Pati, was working with over 250,000 farmers in seven Indian states.

6.2.2 Basix Academy for Building Lifelong Employability (B-ABLE) Ltd.

This entity was co-founded with my IIMA batchmate, Sushil Ramola, who worked most of his professional life as a senior corporate manager and, by 2009, wanted to devote himself to development work. He spent two years studying the sector and designing the offerings his organization makes. In 2011, B-ABLE received the first set of three long-term loans from the newly established National Skill Development Corporation. In the initial years, B-ABLE became a skill training provider for

government-financed vocational training programs under which vocational training was provided. By 2014, B-ABLE had also developed training programs jointly with several corporations to promote self-employment as micro-franchisees of big brands. For example, Essilor, the eyeglass company, sponsored the training of youth to become Eye Mitras (rural opticians). There will be over 8000 Eye Mitras by 2021. By 2021, B-ABLE had trained over half a million youth. The company has been led by Vishal Amarawat as the CEO since 2019.

6.3 Human Resources and Institutional Development Services (HR & IDS)

6.3.1 Institute for Livelihood Research and Training

Basix played a major role in attracting mainstream human resources to the sector. Hundreds of young professionals who joined Basix rose to higher positions at Basix, other MFIs, banks, and insurance companies. The founders of several MFIs had said in public that they learned about microfinance while visiting Basix during its quarterly reviews, when it used to welcome all types of visitors to study its field operations for three days. Samit Ghosh, the founder of Ujjivan, said, "Basix is not an MFI; it is a university for microfinance and livelihood promotion."

The work on HR and IDS was hived off into two separate entities. The HR training work was moved into the Livelihood School, which was set up by Dr. Sankar Datta in 2005. Later, it was incorporated as a society and renamed the Institute for Livelihood Research and Training (ILRT). Under the leadership of Dr. Tabrez Nasar and later Dr. Rajendra Gautam, ILRT has developed the capability of knowledge building in various development themes. It continues to disseminate this knowledge by training a large number of livelihood practitioners in NGO, CSR, and government development agencies.

6.3.2 Basix Consulting and Technology Services Ltd.

By 2011, institutional development work with SHG Federations and Farmer Producer Organizations began to be funded by the central and state governments through agencies such as the Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium and the National Rural Livelihoods Mission. This work was moved into the Consulting Services division of the holding company BASICS Ltd., which was later hived off into a separate company called Basix Consulting and Technology Services Ltd. Consulting assignments also came from other development agencies, such as the Small Industries Development Bank of India, the Women's Development Corporations of states like Bihar and Maharashtra, the Uttar Pradesh Bhoomi Sudhar Nigam, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The software developed by Basix for its microfinance operations was another product that was offered to other MFIs.

My earlier experience as a member of the Executive Committee of the World Bank's Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP, Washington, DC) from 2006 to 2012 enabled me to be part of the global think tank for microfinance. Based on this exposure, Basix was able to get a number of international assignments from the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC). Between 2005 and 2021, Basix worked in over 20 developing countries, including several multi-year projects involving teams resident in the country. Basix teams worked for several years each in some of the least developed countries, including Papua New Guinea, East Timor, Myanmar, and Bhutan in Asia and Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Cameroon in Africa.

7 Conclusion: The Basix Livelihood Mission Is Even More Relevant Post COVID

The COVID pandemic led to a widespread decline in the prospects of the poor and informal sector workers in India (Bhadra, 2021; Johri et al., 2021; Mondal & Chakraborty, 2022). The World Bank estimated that between 23 and 56 million people in India fell back below the poverty line due to the COVID pandemic.[5] At such a time, the mission of Basix, to promote a large number of sustainable livelihoods for the poor using the Livelihood Triad strategy, becomes even more relevant. This diversification strategy (Kistruck et al., 2013b), along with dedication to social intermediation (Kistruck et al., 2013a; Pillai et al., 2021b), ecosystem approach (Bhatt et al., 2021; Qiu et al., 2021), and digital social intermediation (Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018a, 2021a, b, c, d), has the potential to result in inclusive development and inclusive markets (Hota et al., 2023; Bhatt et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., this volume, 2023; Sutter et al., 2023). Inclusive development and markets that are structured using the Gandhian principles of *Antyodaya* and *trusteeship* can provide strong foundations to overcome future shocks. Below, I demonstrate Basix's own experience during COVID using the Livelihood Triad as an example.

7.1 Inclusive Financial Services

Financial services, starting with savings, money transfer services, microcredit, and insurance coverage for life, health, crops, and livestock, continue to be the prime needs of the poor. Thus, these services have been designed to keep the aim of Antyodaya at their core. Before and during COVID, Sub-K built a fully digital

[5] Please see updated information at the World Bank blog https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/pandemic-prices-and-poverty

platform for savings, money transfers, and microcredit, enabling most operations to happen using mobile phones. While this was very handy during the COVID time, it now enables Sub-K to offer this range of services at a lower cost, greater reliability, and anytime, anywhere accessibility. The micro-insurance distribution franchise of Basix, which was lost with BSFL, is a legacy that needed to be revived and integrated with the Sub-K digital platform. Digital financial services have the potential to be used by many developing countries that need such experience and expertise.

7.2 Agricultural, Livestock and Enterprise Development Services

Basix continues to work with small farmers in rural areas through BKSL, keeping Antyodaya and trusteeship as core guiding principles. Basix has built a new digital platform to serve the farmers: the Basix Farmers Market (BFM) in 2021. This has been supported by MasterCard, and the platform enables farmers to enroll digitally and place orders for inputs like seeds, fertilizers, agro-chemicals, and equipment rentals, as well as offer their produce – cereals, oilseeds, pulses, horticultural items like fruits and vegetables, and specialized crops like aromatics and flowers – to buyers such as agro-processing companies and bulk trade buyers. This BFM platform can be extended to cover livestock farmers in the dairy, poultry, and fishery sectors in India. Eventually, the BFM platform can be replicated in other developing countries.

As the platform is digital, it enables price discovery on an ongoing basis. This benefits the farmer in terms of lower input costs and higher product price realization. It can also enable the maintenance of the supply chain in times of disruption, like a pandemic or any other natural disaster. It can also be used for the traceability of produce as well as certification and warehouse receipt-based financing, all of which can be integrated with the BFM platform.

For non-farm enterprises, Basix could upgrade its *skill development and employability training* services through B-ABLE, along the lines of its successful Eye Mitra program. Basix used to run over 5000 e-governance service outlets known as Common Service Centers (CSCs). These need to be revived as self-employment opportunities for educated rural and small-town youth. Basix can also add *e-commerce delivery and collection logistics* as a service to both the CSC e-governance outlets and to the *Sub-K micro-banking outlets*.

Basix has experimented with *environmental enterprises* of different kinds. One idea tried out in Bihar was promoting *"sanitation as a business"* through outlets that sold materials that enabled people to build toilets and ensured that these were kept in service. This work needs to be incubated into an enterprise. Perhaps it can be brought into the subsidiary company Basix Municipal Waste Ventures, which works with urban communities and local bodies to enable *solid waste management*, including segregation at source, doorstep collection, local composting, and sorting for

recycling in material recovery facilities located at the periphery of urban areas. This company has been the main non-government agency working in Indore, which has been declared the cleanest city in India every year since 2016.

Basix had also experimented with *eco-tourism enterprises* in the vicinity of several wildlife sanctuaries and one wetland bird sanctuary, Mangalajodi in Odisha, for which it had received international recognition. This can become another set of self-employment opportunities for *adivasi* (indigenous) youth in forested areas. Basix, through its subsidiary CTRAN Consulting, had structured a large number of carbon transactions and also devised a number of strategies for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. CTRAN was responsible for drawing up the climate change action plans for eight Indian states and also participated in developing the national climate action plan. Though CTRAN was sold to a Big Four consulting firm at the end of 2021, the expertise that Basix has in this field can be used to benefit the rural poor communities in India and other developing countries.

7.3 Human Resource and Institutional Development Services

The 25 years of experience that Basix has in building human resources for the microfinance sector as well as for other livelihood promotion activities such as agricultural and livestock services, employability and skill training, sanitation and solid waste management, renewable energy, and eco-tourism needs to be used to build a large pool of human resources for this work in India and other developing countries.

The knowledge-building activity through action research and consulting services at ILRT and knowledge dissemination through training and institutional development services at Basix Consulting need to be further developed; for this, Basix should consider establishing a development university by upgrading the Institute for Livelihood Research and Training. This will benefit not only all the Indian states but also developing countries in Asia and Africa.

To conclude, the 25-year-long journey of Basix and its encounters with truth are only beginning!

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Technoficing: Reinterpretation of Gandhian Perspectives on Technology

Israr Qureshi, Meet Pandey, Dhirendra Mani Shukla, and Vinay Pillai

1 Introduction

It is anticipated that social enterprises will encourage innovation adoption among the marginalized through intermediation activities to achieve social impact (Ramani et al., 2017). Such collaborative work of intermediaries with local organizations and institutions contributes to the creation of livelihood opportunities for people experiencing poverty through digital[1] and innovative solutions (Bhatt et al., 2021;

[1] We acknowledge that the digital technology has potential to impact on social interactions within organizational (Qureshi et al., 2018a) and online context (e.g. Qureshi et al., 2020, 2022a); however, in this case our focus is on rural marginalized communities, sometimes referred to as the base of the pyramid populations (Qureshi et al., 2016, 2021a, b, c, d)

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Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2021; PwC, 2022; Qiu et al., 2021; Zainuddin et al., 2022). The approach to the use of technology, as purported by Gandhi, emphasized on the importance of working together with both public-public and public-private institutions, particularly in relation to informal, farmer-centered innovations (Singh et al., 2020). Farmers have evolved into negotiators and co-creators of knowledge and innovation under this people-centric innovation framework (Chambers, 2009; Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, 2021). However, rural areas in India face multiple challenges due to caste and gender-based marginalization (Bhatt, 2013, 2022, Bhatt et al., this volume-a, 2023; Hota et al., 2023; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2017, 2018b, 2022b, 2023; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017; Sutter et al., 2023) and deteriorating environmental situation (cf. Bansal et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2022). For example, only 13% of women own land, while over 85% of rural women are employed in agriculture, diluting their negotiating power in society significantly (Oxfam India, 2018, see also, Bhatt et al., 2022; Ghatak et al., this volume). This needs inclusive development through technology that can be used by anyone in rural and marginalized contexts.

A path to technological self-reliance for inclusive development was shown by Gandhi when he promoted the Khadi movement. Spinning and weaving activities mostly using the simple *Charkha*—a small, portable spinning wheel used to spin cotton or other fibers into thread—were adopted as a means to improve the conditions of the marginalized segment of society (Dixit & Lal, 2016; Menon, 2020). It was expected then that leveraging such an appropriate technology would be socially liberating, resource-conserving, and employment generative. It seeks to achieve a balance between industry and agriculture, as well as between modern and traditional technology traditions (Guha, 1988). Gandhi's concern about technology's social, economic, political, and philosophical impact conflicts with the industrialization envisioned by policymakers at the time of India's independence. However, there is increasing awareness about sustainable and responsible technologies after the introduction of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that promote a bottom-up approach through a participatory framework and offers avenues for co-designing and co-creation with the stakeholders (Chien et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021d; Rothe et al., 2022). This chapter employs a Gandhian framework of appropriate technology to examine how social enterprises leverage *technoficing* for social transformation. *Technoficing* is *"the purposeful pursuit of social objectives using a technology that is good enough and appropriate"* in the contexts it is being deployed (Qureshi et al., 2021d, p. 654, see also 2022b).

Further, this chapter explores how a *technoficing* approach to development aligns with Gandhian views of appropriate technology. We also explore the role of the *technoficing* approach in creating value for the beneficiaries of a social intermediary in the Indian context. This is relevant since social intermediaries face severe challenges in co-designing a socio-technical approach for societal welfare purposes (Cortesi et al., 2022; Fogli et al., 2020; Parthiban et al., 2021) especially in a country as diverse as India, which is divided among several social fault lines (Bhatt, 2022; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qureshi et al., 2023; Sutter et al., 2023). The process of information diffusion and technology adoption is challenging in resource-constrained

contexts characterized by social hierarchy (Qureshi et al., 2018b, 2022b, 2023). It is essential for the intermediaries to adapt their activities that not only take into account the context of the beneficiary community but also build their capabilities (Bhatt et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., 2023). Thus, intermediaries need to be socially oriented and committed to maximize the marginalized communities' benefits and align social intermediation activities with these objectives when implementing digital social intermediation (Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021; Zainuddin et al., 2022). We study a social intermediary, with extensive partnerships with its various field-based organizations that engage with rural marginalized farming communities.

In addition to contributing to the Gandhian, *technoficing*, and social intermediation literature, the findings shed light on achieving social impact through technoficing, which can benefit practitioners engaged in resource-constrained environments. Digital social innovation that utilizes a *technoficing* approach is defined by several key elements, including easy-to-use technology, the establishment of linkages with community members, familiarity with supported activities, awareness of marginalization, and social stratification.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Gandhi's Views on Technology

The perspective of Gandhi on technology is rooted in the principles of distributive justice, equitable access to resources, and the provision of basic necessities (Ninan, 2009; Bakker, 1990; see also, Qureshi et al., 2022b, 2023). According to Gandhi, technology should be contextual and relevant to the society it serves and must prioritize the alignment between technology and people (Roy, 2007), who are expected to use it, to reduce costs, and to increase accessibility for the marginalized (see Qureshi et al. 2021d, 2022b). The Charkha is an exemplar of this approach, as it provided a sense of agency to society through decentralized means in resource-constrained settings (Bhaduri & Kumar, 2009). Gandhi also recognized the need to locate industries among the masses, rather than centralized production centers, as this approach ensures that the benefits of industrialization are available to marginalized communities (Patnaik & Bhowmick, 2019).

Moreover, Gandhi emphasized the need for appropriate technology that enhances the productive capacities of the masses and can be utilized by less-skilled laborers (Prahalad & Mashelkar, 2010). This technology must be socially and culturally flexible, affordable, and prioritize the welfare of the individual over the quantity of commodities transacted. Gandhian innovation requires an uncompromising focus on people and integration of all areas of innovation, rendering discrete categorization unnecessary. The principles of *Swadeshi* and self-reliance are central to Gandhi's approach to technology, as is a gender-sensitive, integrated approach to ensure that the most marginalized have their fundamental needs met (Patnaik & Bhowmick, 2019).

Gandhi's perspective on technology challenges the traditional approach to innovation, as it integrates all areas of innovation and requires a clear vision and inclusive goals. To achieve a dynamic interdependence based on cooperative competition and Gandhian innovation, it is essential to place technology and business models appropriately. A deep analysis of the social structure is required to determine the applicability of relevant technology and to empower the community by leveraging their traditional knowledge and diverse talents. Overall, Gandhi's perspective on technology prioritizes the welfare of the individual and the social fabric of society, rather than mass consumption and accumulation of knowledge that is detached from the ground realities.

2.2 Social Intermediation

Social intermediation refers to the process of connecting individuals or groups from marginalized communities to formal markets to enable knowledge sharing, co-creation, economic value addition, and enhance livelihood opportunities (Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013a, b, Pandey et al., 2021; Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2021; Pillai et al., 2021b; Qureshi et al., 2021d). It is a critical aspect of rural development in societies where social and economic constraints due to extensive social stratification and discriminatory social norms impede the livelihood opportunities for the marginalized (Bhatt et al., 2022, this volume-a, 2023; Qureshi et al., 2022b, 2023; Sutter et al., 2023). In such contexts, social intermediation plays a vital role in bridging the gap between marginalized communities and market access and leading to interactions among the various social groups, thus enhancing collaboration and promoting economic development (Bhatt 2022; Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a; Parthiban 2020a, b; Qureshi et al. 2018b; Hota et al., 2019, 2023).

Digital technology can aid social intermediation (Qurehi et al., 2021a, b, c, d). In rural areas, where traditional market structures are primitive and dispersed and poverty alleviation programs are hindered by discriminatory social norms, *technoficing* can serve as a means of promoting social intermediation. The digital social innovation projects that leverage the *technoficing* approach can enable knowledge sharing between communities, enhance social transformation, and create economic value in resource-constrained settings. However, to promote effective social intermediation, it is crucial to ensure that capacity building in rural areas is robust enough to enable the participation of marginalized groups. The absence of formal institutions and mistrust among communities can hinder the participation of external agencies and their personnel in rural development activities. To overcome these challenges, robust boundary workers are required to facilitate substantive knowledge sharing and participant transformation (Qureshi et al., 2018b). Furthermore, social capital plays a significant role in enabling social intermediation activities in rural areas (Bhatt, 2017; Bhatt et al., 2019, Qureshi et al., 2016). Gandhian literature indicates that it is the collective capital and not the individual capabilities of the social groups that will guarantee capability expansion (Mehmood & Imran, 2021; cf. Galang &

Vaughter, 2020). Therefore, being socially embedded in the context is a prerequisite, for any manner of development through social innovation and *technoficing*. This is consistent with Gandhian teachings regarding constructive work and *Sarvodaya*, in which he advocated for the eradication of social fault lines to promote collaboration and economic development. Given the difficulties in overcoming such entrenched fault lines, social intermediaries use various approaches such as scaffolding, constructive work, and prolonged persuasion (Bhatt et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., 2023; Sutter et al., 2023).

Thus, social intermediation plays a vital role in promoting inclusive development (Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume) in rural areas by connecting diverse communities, enabling knowledge sharing (Qureshi et al., 2018b), and creating livelihood opportunities (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Bhatt et al., this volume-a, b; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Javeri et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Qureshi et al., 2022b;). *Technoficing* can serve as an effective approach to implement digital social innovation through social intermediation in resource-constrained settings. However, effective social intermediation requires robust capacity building, the involvement of boundary workers, and the promotion of social capital to overcome the challenges posed by social stratification and discriminatory social norms in rural areas. Next, we discuss technoficing in detail.

2.3 **Technoficing** *and Social Value Creation*

In recent years, the concept of *technoficing* proposed as a pragmatic and context-specific approach to technology deployment (Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c, d, 2022b). *Technoficing* emphasizes the use of existing technology that meets basic needs and can be easily integrated into local infrastructure, rather than developing new technology from scratch. This approach can save time and resources while also promoting greater accessibility and adoption of technology in areas where technical support for advanced technology may be lacking. *Technoficing* recognizes the rapid pace of digital technology evolution and the limitations of seeking cutting-edge technology in resource-constrained contexts. Instead, it focuses on choosing technology that is good enough for the purpose it is being deployed, aligns with the available infrastructure, and is easy to use and maintain (Qureshi et al., 2021d). This approach can promote local ownership and sustainability of technology, as it is more likely to be adopted and maintained by the local community if it aligns with their existing infrastructure and is easy to use and maintain (Qureshi et al., 2022b).

There are several aspects in which *technoficing* differs from the appropriate technology approach that aims to design and develop technologies specifically for the local context. The "appropriate technology" approach emphasizes the designing of technologies, sometimes from scratch, that are simple and environmentally sustainable to address development challenges. We acknowledge that the term appropriate technology encompasses some concepts we wish to convey through *technoficing*. Nevertheless, we also acknowledge that the term appropriate technologies carry

certain limitations and connotations. Based on our experience with organizations such as Center for Appropriate Technology (CfAT) and Centre for Technology Alternatives for Rural Areas (CTARA), we understand that appropriate technology refers to a movement aimed at designing and developing technologies that are specifically tailored to the rural context. While this approach has had some success in non-digital technology domains, such as improvised cookstoves and solar lamps, it has proven to be challenging and unsustainable in the realm of digital technology, as it requires significant resources and quickly becomes obsolete due to the rapid evolution of digital technologies (e.g., One Laptop per Child (OLPC) project). Therefore, an alternative approach would be to select readily available technologies that are simple to use, fit for the purpose they are being deployed, aligned with the existing infrastructure (e.g., using mobile connectivity instead of broadband), and easy to maintain, rather than attempting to develop from scratch a context-specific appropriate technology that may be elusive. We refer to this approach as *technoficing*, which entails leveraging commonly available and accessible technologies to achieve broader social impact in rural areas. In this context, rather than prioritizing cutting-edge or state-of-the-art features, the focus of technoficing should be on meeting local needs, ensuring technology availability and accessibility for the community, which aligns with a more inclusive view of development rather than a technocratic approach.

Technoficing relies on off-the-shelf technologies that are affordable, adaptable, and align well with the capacity of the local participants or the resources in the local context. It is designed to be easily adopted and involves basic and uncomplicated solutions that integrate well with local, physical, or social infrastructure. This approach provides an alternative to conventional technocratic development models, where societies are expected to grow their capacity to absorb technology. *Technoficing* instead adapts technology to address societal issues and prioritize social objectives.

Social intermediaries play a crucial role in *technoficing* by engaging various stakeholders to adopt digital social innovation. In many societies, marginalized groups face several barriers to adopting digital social innovation (Bhatt et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., 2021d, 2023). By creating awareness, reducing barriers for marginalized groups to adopt digital social innovation, and ensuring equitable participation, social intermediaries improve the adoption of technoficed digital solutions (Qureshi et al., 2022b; Sutter et al., 2023). Social intermediaries use the implementation of digital social innovation projects as opportunities for creating dialogues across social groups and ensuring inclusive participation, which then helps ensure all the local skills and resources can be leveraged toward the success of technoficed digital solutions (cf. Qureshi et al., 2022b; Pereira Junior & Spitz, 2017; Sutter et al., 2023). Social intermediaries embedded in the community activities and engaged in improving their livelihood opportunities are essential in coordinating, collaborative information exchange among potential participants, and localizing technological interventions based on hyperlocal knowledge (cf. Qureshi et al., 2021d). Successful social intermediaries employ a mix of technology and social agency to facilitate the implementation of digital social innovations through a technoficing approach. This

collaborative approach and social embeddedness of social intermediary foster local ownership and ensure that technology aligns with the needs and capacities of the local community.

Technoficing can also promote social value creation through the exchange of ideas and knowledge within the community (Qureshi et al., 2018b, 2022b). By prioritizing simpler technological solutions that are affordable and adoptable, *technoficing* encourages the marginalized population to become innovative producers of products and services leveraging digital social innovation rather than mere consumers. This approach empowers the community and fosters a sense of ownership and agency in addressing their own problems. While it may take a long time to convince each social group in the heterogenous and hierarchical communities, the benefit of technoficed solutions implemented by social intermediaries lies in the long-term social, environmental, and economic benefits, which are inclusive, and sustainable.

Thus, *technoficing* presents a pragmatic and context-specific approach to technology development and deployment that prioritizes the use of off-the-shelf technology that is good enough for the purpose for it is being deployed. This approach can lead to greater accessibility, affordability, and sustainability of technology, particularly in resource-constrained contexts. By acknowledging the limitations of seeking cutting-edge technology and focusing on what is feasible and appropriate in the local context, *technoficing* offers a more realistic and effective approach to technology development and deployment. Social intermediaries play a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of *technoficing* by bridging marginalized contexts with formal markets, coordinating information exchange among various social groups to create awareness and localizing technological interventions. This approach empowers local communities, promotes social value production, and fosters sustainable and inclusive development.

3 Case Description

The study focuses on Digital Green (DG), a global not-for-profit organization that uses technoficed solutions to create social impact for marginalized farmers. DG aims to promote sustainable agriculture and development outcomes by leveraging technology and data to increase farmers' income, resilience, and agency. The organization is operational in several regions across South Asia and Eastern Africa, impacting over 2.3 million households where more than 75% of beneficiaries are women (Kementan, 2022; Digital Green, n.d.). DG operates in seven states in India and employs over 150 people in various verticals such as agriculture, public health, and market access (Kementan, 2022). DG utilizes several technological solutions, including Community Videos, Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) support, market platform, and community-based organizations to improve the conditions of marginal communities. These solutions are employed in collaborative projects across states like Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana,

Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, and Assam in India. For purposes of this study, we focus on only their flagship project of Community Videos with IVRS and Short Messaging Service (SMS) support.

Community Videos are produced in several verticals of DG, all of which function under the objective of improving the productivity of the farming community along with their social outcomes. The videos are produced by agricultural extension and frontline workers (FLWs) in a participatory manner with the productive farmers and disseminated in community gatherings. The extension workers are predominantly men, and women form the FLWs. The technology used for the production and dissemination activities includes basic off-the-shelf technologies such as digital cameras and Pico projectors. In special cases, remote dissemination of community videos takes place through WhatsApp messenger, which can also be supported with IVRS facilitation.

4 Field Observation

DG has implemented ICT solutions for development and has established a successful platform of interventions through a collaborative model of knowledge co-creation. For the purpose of this study, we direct our attention toward their most notable initiative, *Community Videos*, which incorporates IVRS and SMS support. Additionally, this intervention is positioned as a cross-cutting approach across multiple projects undertaken by DG.

4.1 Easy-to-Use *Solution: Implementing Digital Social Innovation*

As previously mentioned, Community Videos represent one of DG's most successful interventions, serving as a reliable source of information for agriculture and public health best practices through the creation and dissemination of localized videos. DG facilitates minimal capacity building in video production for community members, including agricultural extension workers and frontline workers (FLWs), utilizing basic off-the-shelf tools such as digital cameras for video recording. These videos are then shared with the wider community by screening them on walls using Pico projectors during Self-Help Group (SHG) gatherings, Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) meetings, and other panchayat activities. The contributors for these videos are mostly dominant or "progressive"[2] farmers, who have higher than

[2] Progressive here is used in the limited meaning of the term. We kept this term because it is commonly used by development professionals in India. A progressive farmer, as stated here, is one who due to the availability of resources is able to adopt a new practice before others. Also, due to sur-

average crop yields. They are not necessarily more literate and knowledgeable than other farmers. Still, sometimes they possess expertise in some farming activities and are willing to share their best practices, which are then captured in the video. The target audience for these videos is often other farmers in the vicinity, including marginalized groups, women, and marginalized castes, many of whom are illiterate farmers who face challenges in articulating and asserting their own knowledge (cf. Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2022b). Recognizing this need in the rural contexts, DG leverages Community Videos to effectively articulate and disseminate knowledge, further strengthened by a robust IVRS and SMS service for warnings and reminders to reinforce the content and knowledge shared through the videos.

In contrast to adopting a technologically advanced platform for disseminating streaming videos to users' mobile phones, DG chose a simpler approach by utilizing portable battery-operated Pico projectors. This decision was in alignment with the rural remote infrastructure where the intervention was implemented, which faced challenges such as poor mobile reception, irregular electricity supply, and absence of broadband connectivity. Recognizing these limitations, DG opted for a practical and feasible solution that would overcome these infrastructural constraints and enable effective dissemination of the community videos. By using Pico projectors, DG was able to overcome the limitations of poor mobile reception and lack of broadband connectivity, allowing for wider access and viewing of the videos in the rural areas where the intervention was targeted. This decision highlights DG's strategic approach of considering the local context and leveraging technoficed solutions to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of their interventions in rural remote areas.

Despite the utilization of a simple technology approach, the dissemination of knowledge through DG's technoficed approach, specifically the Community Videos using Pico projectors, has reportedly yielded significant positive outcomes. Productivity in farming communities has increased, indicating the effectiveness of this intervention in enhancing agricultural practices.[3] The content of the videos was reinforced by extension services such as weather forecasts and soil-related information, which are provided by extension workers and FLWs, further enhancing the knowledge-sharing process.

One notable advantage of the technoficed model is its low reliance on existing infrastructure, making it a cost-effective option. As the intervention utilizes off-the-shelf instruments and does not require advanced technological infrastructure such as broadband connectivity, it is affordable and feasible in rural remote areas where access to such infrastructure may be limited. This underscores the practicality and sustainability of the technoficed approach in addressing the knowledge dissemination needs of the target communities, while also taking into account the resource constraints and affordability considerations of rural areas. The positive outcomes

plus resources, a progressive farmer is willing to take risk. Most often progressive farmers belong to the dominant caste.

[3] An earlier study found that DG's approach is 10 times more effective than traditional training and visit approach (Gandhi et al., 2007)

achieved through this approach highlight the potential for leveraging technoficed solutions to achieve meaningful impact in rural development contexts.

In resource-constrained environments, it is important to use all the resources strategically, including technological ones. Thus, it is imperative for the social intermediary, DG in this case, to strategically utilize digital technologies to address challenges and bridge constraints faced by marginalized communities. In this scenario, where limited access to digital services, low literacy rates, and aversion to external intermediaries was prevalent, a low-cost technoficed solution was implemented to overcome these barriers. However, DG's role was crucial in overcoming the trust deficit, creating an inclusive environment, and removing apprehension about the technology. We discuss these aspects later in this findings section.

The solution DG chose leveraged digital cameras and Pico projectors, which were more cognitive in nature, and did not require extensive capacity building. This made it easier for the marginalized community to adopt without additional effort. The solution was designed to be user-friendly and accessible, taking into consideration the specific constraints of the resource-constrained environment. One key factor that contributed to the success of this intervention is the existing close-knit social groups within the community. Although social groups were initially antagonistic toward each other, they were socially cohesive within. These networks served as channels for spreading awareness and knowledge about the technoficed solution. The element of trust within the social groups played a crucial role in gaining acceptance and adoption of the solution. The familiarity of the technology, which was designed to be cognitively simple, also facilitated its adoption among the marginalized community.

The impact of this technoficed solution goes beyond addressing the immediate constraints of limited access to digital services, low literacy rates, and social barriers. It has the potential to empower the marginalized community by providing them with tools and resources to enhance their livelihoods, improve their economic opportunities, and strengthen within group linkages. By enabling the community to overcome its aversion to external intermediaries and take ownership of the solution, it fosters self-sustainability and resilience. Furthermore, the success of this technoficed solution in a resource-constrained environment highlights the potential of technology to be a catalyst for positive change, even in challenging contexts. It serves as a model for leveraging technology to address social and economic disparities and showcases how technology can be adapted and customized to suit the unique needs and constraints of marginalized communities.

Thus, the low-cost technoficed solution implemented by DG in the resource-constrained environment has been successful in bridging the constraints faced by the marginalized community. Through its user-friendly and cognitive nature and by leveraging existing cohesive groups, trust, and familiarity, the solution was able to overcome the challenges of limited access to digital services, low literacy rates, and aversion to external intermediaries. The eventual impact of this deployment goes beyond addressing immediate constraints and has the potential to empower the marginalized community, fostering self-sustainability and resilience. This successful

intervention serves as a model for leveraging technology in similar contexts, showcasing the transformative power of technology in addressing social and economic disparities (cf. Qureshi et al., 2018b).

4.2 Creating Linkages with Community Members

DG relies on existing village welfare institutions and their frontline workers, such as mediators, ASHA, and ANM workers, to create linkages within the community. Once these linkages are created, it helps record and disseminate videos for community welfare. The possession of technological tools, shared value of community welfare, and existing trust among community members empower workers to document, produce, and disseminate best practices. Feedback mechanisms, community gatherings, and SHG meetings further strengthen this endeavor. DG augments the existing cadre of FLWs and extension workers, providing them with a technoficed solution and capacity building to align institutional mechanisms with the community's social fabric.

The role of a social intermediary in creating linkages within communities is crucial for implementing digital social innovation with a *technoficing* approach. Digital social innovations are designed to address social challenges and create positive social change. Thus, it is imperative for a social intermediary to create linkages within the marginalized communities to understand their concerns ad requirements, which then informs *technoficing* approach to digital social innovation. Technoficing requires the infusion of technology into existing social practices and structures. A social intermediary acts as a facilitator, enabler, and implementer, bridging the gap between the community's expectations and digital social innovation using *technoficing* approach.

One of the key roles of a social intermediary is to establish and maintain linkages within communities. This means building strong relationships with community members; understanding their needs, challenges, and aspirations; and gaining their trust. By being embedded within the community, a social intermediary can better understand the social dynamics, cultural norms, and local context, which are critical factors for implementing digital social innovation effectively through *technoficing* approach. The social intermediary acts as a mediator between the community and the digital solution, translating the needs of the community with a good enough technology. Social intermediaries can translate technical jargon into accessible language that community members can understand. They can also provide education and training to build digital literacy skills among community members, enabling them to effectively utilize digital technologies for social innovation. This includes providing guidance on how to access and use digital tools, navigate various solutions, and understand the implications of using technology in their social context.

Furthermore, the social intermediary plays a vital role in identifying relevant digital technologies and integrating them into existing community practices. This involves understanding the unique needs of the community and identifying

appropriate digital solutions that align with their goals and aspirations. The social intermediary can also facilitate co-creation and co-design processes, involving community members in the design and development of digital solutions to ensure that they are contextually relevant and meet the community's needs. In addition, the social intermediary can help in building partnerships and collaborations between different stakeholders, such as community organizations, technology providers, policymakers, and researchers. These partnerships can leverage the collective knowledge, expertise, and resources of various stakeholders to support the implementation of digital social innovation initiatives. The goal is to keep technology as simple as possible and root it in the social context. Having strong community linkages helps achieve this goal. The social intermediary can also advocate for the needs and interests of the community, ensuring that their voices are heard and considered in the decision-making processes related to digital social innovation.

Overall, the role of a social intermediary with linkages within communities is crucial for implementing digital social innovation with a technoficing approach. By building relationships, translating technical concepts, facilitating co-creation, and fostering collaborations, the social intermediary can bridge the gap between technology and communities and ensure that digital social innovation initiatives are contextually relevant, inclusive, and sustainable.

4.3 Familiarity with Activities

In the context of digital social innovation implemented with a technoficing approach, familiarity with the activities for which the innovation is being implemented plays a crucial role. Trust and familiarity are important factors in ensuring the success and impact of the initiative. The FLWs (Frontline Workers) and extension workers helped DG gain familiarity with communities, as they were already embedded in the community and trusted by the community members. This helped bridge the gap of distrust that may have existed toward external intermediaries (cf. Qureshi et al., 2018b). This familiarity made the process of introducing and adopting technology solutions simpler and less aversive to the wider community.

The knowledge providers who produce the content for the digital social innovation initiative were the more productive community farmers who were familiar with the other farmers, who were shown these videos. This familiarity helped in capturing the nuances of the agricultural process and presenting it in a way that appealed to most audiences. The use of community videos with easy-to-adopt information provided by familiar farmers ensured better dissemination of information and understanding among the community members.

The weekly meetings of FLWs and extension workers with the community, which involved multiple screenings of the videos, provided opportunities for all to learn new techniques. The group meetings held for the screening process further enhance familiarity with the content and process. A robust feedback mechanism facilitated by the FLWs and extension workers, who were familiar with the

community members, helped in addressing issues and requesting clarifications in multiple iterations. The use of multiple iterations at the beginning of other videos for dissemination of important information ensured reinforcement of the information.

The familiarity of a social intermediary with the activities for which digital social innovation with a technoficing approach is being implemented is of utmost importance. It enables the social intermediary to better understand the specific needs, challenges, and nuances of the activities or practices being addressed, in this case, agricultural practices, to effectively design and implement digital solutions that are contextually relevant and impactful. There are several key reasons why familiarity with the activities is important for a social intermediary implementing digital social innovation with a technoficing approach.

First, contextual understanding helps a social intermediary become familiar with the activities or practices being addressed through digital social innovation and thus can help them better understand the context in which those activities take place. They can grasp the intricacies, complexities, and nuances of the activities, including the social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors that influence them. This deep contextual understanding allows the social intermediary to design and implement digital solutions that are well-aligned with the needs and realities of the activities, making them more effective and sustainable.

Second, familiarity with the activities enables the social intermediary to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment. They can identify the specific challenges, gaps, and opportunities associated with the activities and determine how digital technologies can best address them. This involves engaging with the stakeholders involved in the activities, such as the community members, practitioners, and other relevant actors, to understand their perspectives and gather insights. A thorough needs assessment is critical for developing targeted, contextualized, and relevant digital solutions that leverage *technoficing* approach and can have a meaningful impact on the activities.

Third, familiarity with the activities also facilitates meaningful co-creation and co-design processes. Co-creation requires involving the community members and other stakeholders in the design and development of digital solutions, while co-design entails collaboratively designing the solutions with their input. In DG's case, the farmers were involved as content creators, and local community members were involved as mediators for the dissemination of videos. When the social intermediary is familiar with the activities, they can engage in more meaningful and participatory co-creation and co-design processes. They can work closely with the stakeholders to co-create solutions that are tailored to the unique needs, preferences, and aspirations of the activities, resulting in solutions that are more likely to be accepted, adopted, and sustained by the community.

Fourth, digital social innovation with a technoficing approach aims to create solutions that are contextually relevant and sustainable. When the social intermediary is familiar with the activities, they can ensure that the digital solutions are designed in a way that is sensitive to the local context, culture, and practices. This includes factors such as language, literacy levels, accessibility, and usability of digital solutions. By ensuring local relevance, the social intermediary can increase the

likelihood of adoption and success of the digital social innovation initiatives, as they are better tailored to the needs and realities of the activities.

Finally, familiarity with the activities also helps build trust and credibility among the community members and other stakeholders. When the social intermediary demonstrates an understanding of the activities and their nuances, it establishes a level of trust and credibility, as the stakeholders perceive the social intermediary as someone who understands their context and is genuinely invested in addressing their needs. This trust is critical for effective engagement, collaboration, and co-creation processes, as it enables the social intermediary to build rapport, establish meaningful relationships, and create a conducive environment for implementing digital social innovation initiatives that utilize a *technoficing* approach.

Thus, the familiarity of a social intermediary with the activities for which digital social innovation with a technoficing approach is being implemented is of significant importance. It allows the social intermediary to have a deep contextual understanding, conduct needs assessments, facilitate co-creation and co-design processes, ensure local relevance, and build trust and credibility. All these factors contribute to the effective design and implementation of digital solutions with *technoficing* approaches that are contextually relevant, impactful, and sustainable, ultimately leading to positive social change.

4.4 Awareness of Marginalization and Social Stratification

The technoficing approach in digital social innovation, as exemplified in the case of DG, has shown how technology can empower marginalized groups, specifically women and marginalized castes, and address issues of inequalities and intersectionality. One key aspect is the use of inclusive technology that provides access to information and knowledge addressing specific challenges faced by women. These platforms offered by DG have helped women in farming communities to overcome the gender divide in access to farming and related practices. Through community gatherings facilitated by DG, women are provided with a forum to acquire knowledge, voice their views, and actively contribute to decision-making processes that were previously dominated by men. This has resulted in women gaining agency, leadership skills, and negotiation abilities, which are crucial for their empowerment in the institutional structure of their communities.

Furthermore, the use of technology, such as mobile devices, has facilitated virtual networking and engagement for women. Women who have gained access to technology through DG's initiatives are able to participate actively in virtual networks, which can provide them with additional avenues for learning, collaboration, and empowerment. The impact of this digital social innovation with a technoficing approach goes beyond just addressing gender inequalities in farming and related practices. It also has positive externalities in other areas, such as public health. For instance, men who may not traditionally participate in women-centric gatherings facilitated by DG about healthcare can still access information and knowledge

through videos provided by DG. This has helped men to learn and incorporate the knowledge gained into their responsibilities, including those related to reproductive health, leading to positive changes in the patriarchal mindset and contributing to better reproductive health outcomes for women.

The technoficing approach in digital social innovation, as demonstrated in the case of DG, highlights the potential of technology to bridge gender gaps, empower marginalized groups, and contribute to positive social change, if designed correctly with understanding marginalization issues. It underscores the importance of social intermediaries, such as DG, having awareness of the specific challenges, needs, and dynamics of the communities they work with, including issues of marginalization and social stratification. This awareness allows them to design and implement initiatives that are inclusive, participatory, and tailored to the context, leading to more impactful and sustainable outcomes.

The awareness of marginalization and social stratification in the social context where digital social innovation with a technoficing approach is being implemented is crucial for a social intermediary. It enables them to understand and address the complex social dynamics and power relations that may affect the implementation of digital solutions and to ensure that the innovation efforts do not inadvertently perpetuate or exacerbate existing inequalities. Here are some key reasons why awareness of marginalization and social stratification is important for a social intermediary implementing digital social innovation with a technoficing approach.

First, understanding marginalization and social stratification in the social context helps the social intermediary in conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and targeting the most vulnerable or marginalized groups. It enables them to identify the specific challenges and barriers faced by these groups in accessing and benefiting from digital solutions. This information is critical for designing targeted interventions that are tailored to the unique needs and realities of these groups. By taking into consideration the social dynamics of marginalization and social stratification, the social intermediary can ensure that the digital solutions are designed to reach and benefit those who need them the most and not further exclude or disadvantage marginalized populations.

Second, marginalization and social stratification are pervasive issues in many communities, with certain groups facing systemic disadvantages and discrimination based on factors such as caste, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and more. Social intermediaries who are aware of these inequalities can design and implement digital social innovation initiatives that specifically target and address these disparities. Most often a technoficed solutions it more aligned with marginalized communities as they lack resources to participate in digital social innovations that apply advanced technologies. By recognizing the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups, social intermediaries can develop solutions that are more inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of these communities. Digital social innovation with a technoficing approach aims to create positive social change by leveraging digital technologies. However, if the social intermediary lacks awareness of marginalization and social stratification, there is a risk that the digital solutions may not be inclusive and may further marginalize already

vulnerable groups or exacerbate existing social disparities. Awareness of marginalization and social stratification allows the social intermediary to intentionally design digital solutions that promote equity, inclusion, and social justice. It helps them identify and address potential biases, discriminatory practices, and power imbalances that may arise during the implementation of technoficed digital social innovation initiatives.

Third, marginalized groups often face barriers to accessing and benefiting from digital technologies and social innovation initiatives. These barriers can be technological, financial, educational, cultural, or social in nature. Social intermediaries who are aware of marginalization and social stratification can identify these barriers and work toward overcoming them through properly structuring their technoficed digital social innovation. For example, they can develop strategies to bridge the digital divide, provide training and support for marginalized groups to build digital skills, or develop culturally relevant approaches to engage with communities that may have different social norms or practices. This awareness allows social intermediaries to proactively address barriers and ensure that digital social innovation initiatives are accessible to all members of the community, including marginalized groups.

Fourth, awareness of marginalization and social stratification also empowers the social intermediary to actively involve marginalized groups in the digital social innovation process. It allows them to create opportunities for meaningful participation and engagement of these groups, giving them a voice in decision-making, co-creation, and co-design processes. This empowerment can help marginalized groups gain ownership, agency, and a sense of belonging in the digital social innovation process, leading to more sustainable and impactful outcomes. By actively involving marginalized groups in *technoficing* approach, the social intermediary can also foster empowerment and social inclusion, contributing to the overall well-being and resilience of the community.

Fifth, digital social innovation with a *technoficing* approach raises ethical considerations related to data privacy, surveillance, consent, and power dynamics. Awareness of marginalization and social stratification helps the social intermediary navigate these ethical considerations with sensitivity and critical reflection while implementing technoficed digital social innovation. It allows them to carefully consider the potential impacts of digital solutions on marginalized groups and to ensure that ethical principles, such as fairness, accountability, and transparency, are upheld throughout the technoficed digital social innovation process. This awareness helps prevent unintended negative consequences and promotes responsible and ethical use of technology in the context of digital social innovation.

Sixth, ultimately, the awareness of marginalization and social stratification contributes to the creation of more sustainable and just outcomes in the implementation of digital social innovation initiatives. It helps the social intermediary consider the broader social context, power relations, and structural inequalities that may influence the outcomes of the innovation efforts. By addressing these issues, the social intermediary can work toward more equitable and inclusive outcomes that benefit all members of the community, particularly those who are

marginalized or disadvantaged. Social justice is a fundamental principle of social innovation. Being aware of marginalization and social stratification allows social intermediaries to critically reflect on the power dynamics, social norms, and systemic issues that contribute to inequalities in the community. This awareness enables them to work toward more just and equitable outcomes by advocating for social changes, challenging discriminatory practices, and promoting social cohesion and harmony within the community.

Thus, the awareness of marginalization and social stratification in the social context where digital social innovation with a technoficing approach is being implemented is essential for social intermediaries. It allows them to design and implement initiatives that are inclusive, equitable, empowering, and socially just. By addressing these issues, social intermediaries can contribute to positive social change and foster sustainable and impactful outcomes in the context of digital social innovation. It also helps them navigate ethical considerations and quandaries.

5 Discussion

In this case study, we examined a case of a social intermediary that implemented a digital social innovation using a *technoficing* approach to create social impact in a marginalized community. It relied on deploying an easy-to-use solution, creating linkages with the community members, leveraging its familiarity with the agriculture practices, and showing an awareness of marginalization and social stratification. The case aimed to demonstrate how a technoficing model, aligned with the Gandhian framework, can be used by a social intermediary to effectively address social challenges. Despite the resource constraints, the simplicity of the digital social innovation made it easily adaptable and contributed to the community's self-reliance through efficient information delivery. This study contributes to the literature on social entrepreneurship, *technoficing*, and Gandhian concepts of village development and self-reliance.

The existing literature on social entrepreneurship has mainly focused on the effectiveness of technological innovation in providing simple ICT solutions to address societal issues. Digital intermediation is widely seen as a way to tackle societal problems, but there are limited examples of how social innovation drives such efforts. The findings of this study shed light on an example where a technoficed solution was deployed to maximize social impact and how it aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) through improved agricultural extension services. The study also highlights how the technoficed model offers an alternative pathway to sustainable development in marginalized contexts, as it avoids some of the challenges associated with the horizontal scaling of social organizations.

Furthermore, this study contributes to Gandhian literature by showcasing how technoficing aligns with the Gandhian concept of minimalist technology use. *Technoficing* is in sync with the Gandhian approach of technology being affordable, easy to adopt, and applicable in resource-constrained contexts, that is, the

technology of the marginalized and poor. The technoficed intervention also leverages technology while accommodating cultural diversity, fostering participation and social inclusion. It demonstrates how village self-reliance can be achieved without significant strains on meagre resources and limited technology skills, aligning with Gandhian principles of democratized development.

Additionally, this case study exemplifies how existing resources, skills, and networks can be leveraged to form innovative collaborations and implementation. The findings also highlight how the social intermediary addresses multifaceted societal issues with uncomplicated solutions, particularly in making digital social innovation more inclusive. This aligns with existing literature on social sustainability and environmental sustainability. These findings also contribute to Gandhian studies by expanding the concept of Sarvodaya, where marginalized communities possess agency and become more confident and self-sustained.

The strategic utilization of digital technologies by social intermediaries in resource-constrained environments, such as DG in this case, is crucial for addressing challenges and bridging constraints faced by marginalized communities. DG's low-cost *technoficing* approach, which utilized user-friendly and cognitive technologies like digital cameras and Pico projectors, successfully overcame barriers of limited access to digital services, low literacy rates, and aversion to external intermediaries. The solution was tailored to suit the specific constraints of the resource-constrained environment, showcasing its potential to empower the marginalized community and foster self-sustainability and resilience. This serves as a model for leveraging technology to address social and economic disparities in similar contexts, demonstrating the transformative power of technology.

The role of a social intermediary in creating linkages within communities is crucial for implementing digital social innovation with a *technoficing* approach. Social intermediaries need to establish and maintain strong relationships with community members; understand their needs, challenges, and aspirations; and gain their trust. By being embedded within the community and understanding the local context, social intermediaries can effectively implement digital social innovation through *technoficing*. They act as mediators, translating technical concepts into accessible language for community members, providing education and training to build digital literacy skills, identifying relevant digital technologies, facilitating co-creation and co-design processes, and building partnerships and collaborations between stakeholders. The goal is to keep technology simple and rooted in the social context, and strong community linkages help achieve this goal. The social intermediary also advocates for the needs and interests of the community, ensuring that their voices are heard in decision-making processes related to digital social innovation.

In the context of implementing digital social innovation with a *technoficing* approach, social intermediaries must be aware of marginalization and social stratification to ensure that the innovation efforts do not perpetuate or exacerbate existing inequalities. This awareness is crucial for several reasons. First, it enables social intermediaries to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and target the most

vulnerable or marginalized groups, designing interventions that are tailored to their unique needs and realities. Second, awareness of marginalization and social stratification allows for the development of solutions that specifically address systemic disadvantages and discrimination faced by marginalized groups, leading to more inclusive and equitable outcomes. Third, it helps identify and overcome barriers to access and benefit from digital technologies and social innovation initiatives, such as technological, financial, educational, cultural, or social barriers. Fourth, it empowers social intermediaries to actively involve marginalized groups in the innovation process, giving them a voice in decision-making and co-creation processes. Fifth, awareness of ethical considerations related to data privacy, surveillance, consent, and power dynamics allows for responsible and ethical use of technology in the context of digital social innovation. Last, awareness of marginalization and social stratification contributes to the creation of more sustainable and just outcomes by considering the broader social context, power relations, and structural inequalities that may influence innovation efforts. Ultimately, this awareness enables social intermediaries to design and implement initiatives that are inclusive, equitable, empowering, and socially just, fostering positive social change and impactful outcomes in the context of digital social innovation.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the strategic utilization of digital technologies by social intermediaries in resource-constrained environments, exemplified by DG's low-cost *technoficing* solution, has shown to be crucial for addressing challenges faced by marginalized communities. By tailoring interventions to suit the specific constraints of the environment, social intermediaries can empower marginalized communities, foster self-sustainability, and bridge social and economic disparities. The role of a social intermediary in creating strong linkages within communities is essential for implementing digital social innovation with a technoficing approach, including translation of technical concepts, building digital literacy skills, facilitating co-creation processes, and advocating for community needs. However, social intermediaries must also be aware of marginalization and social stratification to ensure that their efforts are inclusive, equitable, and socially just. This awareness allows for targeted interventions, overcoming barriers to access, empowering marginalized groups, considering ethical considerations, and creating sustainable outcomes. Overall, leveraging technology through social intermediaries in resource-constrained environments has the potential to drive positive social change and transformative impacts through digital social innovation.

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Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development

Satyan Mishra and Dhirendra Mani Shukla

1 Introduction

This chapter presents reflections of Mr. Satyan Mishra, a social entrepreneur who co-founded Drishtee as a social enterprise, on his and Drishtee's experiences and learning over the last 25 years. The chapter begins with his views on the deepening problems of rural life and the role of social entrepreneurship in responding to these problems (Dees, 1998; Hota et al., 2019, 2023). The co-founder has described how his interpretations of Gandhian thought have shaped Drishtee's paths over the due course of time. The chapter documents the key initiatives undertaken by Drishtee in the last two decades of its journey, as the social enterprise continues to be inspired by Gandhian thoughts. Toward the end, the chapter also presents some of the ongoing experimentations of Drishtee at the organizational level to enable village self-reliance through decentralization and self-managed teams (Goodman et al., 1988; Napathorn, 2018). Finally, it briefly mentions the future paths of Drishtee to improve the self-reliance and sustainability of the rural ecosystem, which it has been enabling over the last two decades.

This chapter is co-authored by Satyan Mishra and Dhirendra Mani Shukla. "I," "we," or "our," in this chapter, refer to the experiences and thoughts of Satyan Mishra as a leader (co-founder) of the social enterprise "Drishtee," or the social enterprise as a collective.

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2 Views on Issues of Rural Life and the Role of Social Entrepreneurship

In its 25 years, Drishtee has played a small, yet meaningful role, in developing entrepreneurship in the villages. Its efforts have resulted in the creation of livelihood opportunities for more than 25,000 households in rural areas. Drishtee's intent is to continue this journey armed with a promise, and in collaboration with the local communities, to ensure that every community offers a source of livelihood to all its members without having them migrate from their natural habitat. We believe that rural-to-urban migration and reduced interest in agriculture create a serious threat to the sustainability of both rural and urban lives. In the below sub-section, I have presented my views on the deepening problems of rural lives, which challenge the sustainability of rural lives and livelihood opportunities. Following this, I have presented my opinion on the relevance of the Gandhian perspective in inspiring social entrepreneurship and suggested how social entrepreneurship can be an effective response to the deepening problems of rural lives.

2.1 Deepening Problems of Rural Lives

Revolutionary technological changes have shaped our lives over the last century (Morgan, 2019; Qureshi et al., this volume). From television to the internet and from computers to smartphones, technological advancements and changes in businesses have commenced at a swift pace, leading us to an era of industrial revolution 4.0 (Ghobakhloo, 2020; Morgan, 2019). One important implication of faster technological innovation and the industrial revolution has been the increased appeal of urban lifestyles and the migration of the rural workforce into urban areas (Rogers & Williamson, 1982). This phenomenon has increasingly affected not only the labor-intensive agriculture sector but also several aspects of rural life including local production and consumption of goods and services (Choithani et al., 2021).

With nearly 600 million people living in Indian villages (RBI, 2022), there is increasing pressure on land to provide for livelihood. With every generation, the division of land makes it harder for farming to remain economically viable. While the country is boasting to possess the youngest population in the developing world, most of the young population is being lured away by cities, and India is transitioning from farming to a non-farming economy (Majumdar, 2020). Farming as a profession has not just lost sustainability but apparently has also lost the respect, which it deserves, before any other profession.

Additionally, over the decades, several societal problems such as malnourishment and hunger have been considered linked with poverty and poor productivity from agriculture. This has attracted the attention of the government and development organizations, who introduced fertilizers (and associated subsidies) and the mandi system as solutions to enhance productivity and income generation. Thus, with increased usage of chemicals and mechanized tools, the volume over variety

was a natural choice for the farmers looking to make a decent living off the land. It has slowly led to the abandonment of old farming practices, which included subtle nuances of multi-cropping, soil balance, and organic waste usage. These practices are used to lead to a healthier diet. Moreover, the failure of the existing supply chain and assured local market (i.e., *mandi*) has steadily led to the degeneration of the concept of integrated farming. Single crop fields and volume production for the *Mandi* (commodity markets) have further damaged the prospects of sustainable agriculture (Tabriz et al., 2021).

Overall, increased migration from rural to urban areas, decreased focus on agriculture, and altered farming practices have not only impacted the prospects of sustainable livelihood opportunities through agriculture but have also undermined the potential of rural economies in generating sustainable well-being for the rural inhabitants.

2.2 Social Entrepreneurship as a Response to the Problems of Rural Lives

As we reflect on some of the deepening issues of rural areas, it reminds us how yet we have been unable to fully comprehend Gandhi's perspective on the integrated nature of economic, ecological, and social spheres of life. We believe that his vision of ideal villages, where artisans and farmers epitomized self-sufficiency, can still provide a pathway to address most of the abovementioned concerns and help make rural life and livelihood sustainable. We have deep faith in the view that the "spinning wheel" (*Charkha*) symbolizes freedom and self-sufficiency (Parel, 1969). However, we believe that the "act of spinning" is a symbol of entrepreneurship. Self-sufficiency and freedom can only be achieved by constantly engaging in the entrepreneurial exercise of "spinning the wheel." In our interpretation, the Gandhian perspective has always emphasized that entrepreneurship is the primary tool to bring social and economic transformation. Gandhi was never against profit making, but, in his view, entrepreneurship must be driven by a sense of social responsibility and commitment toward community development (Bhatt, 2017, 2022; Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Bhatt et al., 2013, 2019, 2022; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume), which is often construed as social entrepreneurship by academicians and practitioners (Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a, b; Dees, 1998; Hota et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., 2023). He believed in prioritizing the needs of workers and customers over profit-making and advocated for developing businesses that were driven by social, economic, and environmental responsibilities (Ghosh, 1989; Javeri et al., this volume). Further, he envisioned autonomy and self-reliance for entrepreneurs and warned against external dependency on resources (Ganguli, 1977). His view was that entrepreneurs should create businesses that are self-sufficient and require leveraging local resources and support (Trivedi, 2007). However, Gandhi was aware that the path of entrepreneurship would be challenging for the marginalized and downtrodden, and, hence, he viewed a greater role of civil society and community in providing support and enabling entrepreneurial capabilities in those who were marginalized (Ghatak et al., this volume; Ghosh, 1989;

Iyengar, 2000). We believe this is exactly where Drishtee sees its roles and responsibilities to enable marginalized in rural areas and make them capable of earning a livelihood in a sustainable manner.

Indeed, if one looks closely, entrepreneurship is not a choice but a necessity in rural areas, be it in agriculture or other livelihood opportunities. Entrepreneurial capabilities are necessary to create sustainable livelihood opportunities for households in rural areas. Further, a substantial increase in productivity over the next few years would be required to make agriculture and rural context attractive to the younger workforce (Brooks et al., 2013). Moreover, to retain them in the village, further changes will be needed in the education system, banking, health care, and basic infrastructure. Such improvements may not be feasible without developing entrepreneurial capabilities in rural communities (Bacq et al., 2022).

Despite the recognizable need to improve entrepreneurship in rural areas, the collective efforts toward this end are yet to achieve the desired focus and scale from civil societies, governments, or businesses. Thus, from the rural community development perspective, it is apparent that our actions over the last seven decades since independence have not been consistent with Gandhi's vision of self-reliant rural communities (Dasgupta, 1996; Kumarappa, 1951). Perhaps, in the pursuit of economic growth, we have moved in the opposite direction, making rural economies largely dependent on the urban markets for both production and consumption (Bryceson, 2002).

Nonetheless, there are a few organizations, such as PRADAN, Association for Sarva Seva Farms (ASSEFA), BASIX, and Seva Mandir (Ghosh, this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume), which are inspired by Gandhian view to develop self-reliant rural communities and improve rural life. In a similar vein, Drishtee, over the last two decades, has been constantly striving to improve the sustainability of rural lives and bring shared prosperity to rural areas. However, I believe our journey has been evolutionary. It was not that, in our initial days, our vision was fully inspired by Gandhian thoughts. We started with a for-profit motive to exploit the opportunities created by the booming internet era. However, as we developed commitment and affection for the rural areas, our understanding of the Gandhian views and paths became clearer. Consequently, the later part of our journey has been strongly inspired by Gandhian thoughts. Below, I present the evolution of Drishtee.

3 Evolution of Drishtee: Drawing Inspiration from Gandhian Perspective

3.1 Changing Focus from Urban to Rural

Drishtee started as a for-profit social enterprise in the year 1998. It aimed to create economic and social value. Its start in Bhopal (a town in Central India) was modest. Its facilities were used as a small cybercafé at night coupling with a computer training center in the daytime. However, with the growth of the internet and our

entrepreneurial spirit, our first venture soon became the talk of the town. Within 2 years, we have expanded to two more cities and started realizing our dreams of generating an economic surplus. Early in the year 2000, Drishtee got an opportunity to set up an internet-based service center in a rural area, which villagers could use to connect to provincial administration and access E-Government services. We decided to adopt a model in which we engaged local village-level entrepreneurs for service provisioning. Our initial idea was that such a model will improve accessibility for the citizens and also generate livelihood prospects for village entrepreneurs. Rural citizens could access E-Government services in their own village and save their time in commuting to blocks or district headquarters. Moreover, as it engaged local entrepreneurs, we believed that this model will invoke trust in the rural people and encourage them to avail of internet-based services. In the early days, this opportunity in the rural context did not seem most exciting. However, sooner, it became a game changer for Drishtee and for many other organizations who were seeking to empower rural communities.

Having my roots in one of the most backward areas in Bihar, it was not surprising for me to see a lack of jobs, poverty, and illiteracy among the rural population. However, what stood out was the quotient of happiness that oozed out from the community toward a new system or a new device in the form of the computer and IT. This motivated us, and as we started investing more time and resources in the rural areas, our affection toward the area and desire to help rural people grew. The decision of Drishtee to move from town to village was almost unimaginable at the start of our journey. However, as we became more emotionally invested with the rural communities, its affection drew Drishtee with such fortitude that we all were swept off our feet.

3.2 Developing an Ecosystem Approach of Scaling

From a business perspective, our initial venturing into rural areas was not lucrative. We could only earn a couple of cents for each dollar, which was earned by the village entrepreneur, who used to manage the rural E-Government provisioning service. Having large costs and with a diminishing focus on the urban business, we had to scale up faster in villages to make ends meet. The challenges of scalability of social businesses have been a matter of concern for both practitioners and academicians over the years (Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013a, b; Qureshi et al., 2021d). Scholars have suggested several approaches to scaling the impact of social businesses, which include scaling up, scaling by diversification, scaling across and deep, and scaling by using an ecosystem approach (Qureshi et al., 2021d). Being new in the rural areas, we believed scaling up by focusing on our service provisioning can help get a deeper insight into the rural areas and build our strengths and also increase our reach to several geographies (André & Pache, 2016).

However, soon, we realized that the village was not looking up to us for what we had to offer, rather they were more interested in meeting their needs. E-Government

service was a part of their need, but definitely their priorities included livelihood opportunities and financing needs, in addition to the availability of health care services and banking. After a few years, we realized that our offerings required adapting to the needs of the rural population. It made sense to us to develop an ecosystem through which the diverse needs of the rural population can be catered to (Acs et al., 2018; Bhatt et al., 2021). Hence, over the years, our approach changed from scaling up to an ecosystem approach scaling (Bhatt et al., 2021). We aimed to build social businesses driven by their needs and owned and operated by them. In this regard, we visualized our role as an enabler of the ecosystem (Bhatt et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021d).

Indeed, Drishtee is still learning to function within its new role as an ecosystem provider. However, the initial challenges were prominent for its learning. We observed that the culture of free service, free products, and above all subsidies had made it difficult for social businesses in rural areas to even break even. Consequently, hardly anyone in the village was interested in engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Most of them did not wish to start any business in the village but rather wanted to move to the cities with assumptions of better earnings prospects. Even many of the landowners had moved out of their villages, because of lacking basic amenities and services in the villages such as health care, transportation, education for children, etc. Those who had remained in the village were feeling the pain in terms of the quality of products and services, which were on offer. Drishtee realized that any intervention had to start with expectations of better quality and differentiation with what was on offer through the subsidized or free channel: be it healthcare, education, or even basic vocational training.

Drishtee understood that a viable ecosystem may not be possible without fixing the issues of an effective supply chain in rural areas. We started our efforts to develop a supply chain. We believed that with an effective supply chain, the villagers cannot only get products that they need at a desirable price but also be able to get their products to reach outside markets, as there was hardly any local market for the rural products. However, our initial efforts could succeed only in getting some aspirational products to the local communities.

However, over time, Drishtee became fully invested, both emotionally and materially, in the village. We were desperate to ensure that villagers built their livelihood with the limited resources they had and the minimum ecosystem support that we could offer to them initially. With the intent to bring the required change, we started providing paid vocational training and encouraged men and women to form enterprises. We kept a token fee to provide a behavioral nudge to move out of the prevailing subsidy culture while ensuring the affordability of our services to budding entrepreneurs. Over the due course of time, we realized that women were more interested in paying the token money to avail of training whereas men were willing to wait for the "free courses" offered through subsidized sources such as government and nongovernment agencies. Also, we noticed that women, after getting trained, were willing to come together for production leaving aside their caste and even religious boundaries. Although these changes were very gradual, it was nothing

short of a miracle to us. We started realizing that it was the rural women who bore the potential of bringing change in the rural areas.

It was interesting to learn how women approached their businesses. We observed that their priority was not profitability but sustainability. They evaluated a business based on savings and reduction in cash outflow perspective, rather than looking at it from a revenue perspective (i.e., cash inflow). For example, they assessed to what extent a product can be consumed by them or their family and can thus reduce their dependence on the external market where they needed to pay for a product. Then, they assessed whether some part of their products can be consumed by their neighbors through monetary or nonmonetary transactions. At times, they saw their neighbors buying their produce in exchange for other goods for which their families needed to pay. In other words, we observed that rural women evaluated the presence of the local market and also explored the potential of nonmonetary transactions, which could further reduce their cash outflows, before deciding whether to engage in any business or not. Thus, we learned from them that income earned in monetary terms as a measure of impact may not be appropriate because of women's broader consideration of a market (local exchanges and mandis) and modes of exchanges (i.e., monetary and nonmonetary). We learned that rural women measured their success differently. They considered production and productivity as the first benchmark, while the fulfillment of their basic needs was the primary expectation. Also, they regarded savings as more sacred than income. We believe that rural women's approach was partly shaped by the culture and history of the rural areas, where "barter" used to be a prevailing mode of exchange (Verma, 1980).

Our learning led to devising a "barter-based system" for the rural area. Since the urban market was far and practically inaccessible while the rural market was plagued by the issue of cash flows, which were rare and unreliable, barter had an acceptance with the rural women. Drishtee used the age-old system of exchange (i.e., barter) and converted that into an Android application, which now facilitates barter in rural areas and is executed through a local woman entrepreneur. Below, the key features and novelties of the "barter system" introduced by Drishtee are described.

3.3 Barter: A Solution to Enabling Self-Reliance

With around 70% of the population residing in villages, India is primarily a rural country (RBI, 2022). The rural economy contributes around 46% of the country's national income (NITI Aayog, 2017). Thus, inclusive development in India requires growth and development of the rural part of the country. If one looks at the value chain of most of the products, a crucial part of the value addition occurs in rural areas (e.g., in terms of raw materials). Yet, these producers of the raw materials earn relatively less margin compared to the various intermediaries (middlemen) engaged in sourcing raw materials or providing finished products to the rural areas. At times, rural consumers buy the finished agri-based products at much higher prices than

what rural producers earn by selling the agri-based raw materials. As the product goes through several intermediaries, the price of the final product used for consumption is significantly higher.

Further, it also increases the rural people's dependency on the urban market both for production and consumption. This dependency has a detrimental effect on the well-being of the rural economy when supply chains are broken because of external disruptions. For example, during the COVID-19 situation, most of the urban industrial units engaged in producing finished goods were mostly closed because of restricted transportation and logistics. This disruption broke the supply chain between rural and urban markets both for production and consumption (Reardon et al., 2020). Also, a huge migrant labor force was compelled to return to their villages for basic subsistence.

However, this reverse migration of the skilled labor force offers an opportunity for the rural economy if it can be channelized into setting up micro or mini enterprises for producing various goods and creating more local jobs and developing entrepreneurs in the rural areas (Behera et al., 2021). Effective functioning of the market will still be a challenge as the major cash inflow to the rural market is through urban trades and a constraint on this cash flow in rural markets because of the pandemic can restrict the buying capacity of rural consumers. Although this situation does not sound healthy, it may create opportunities for alternative nonmonetary transactions such as the barter system (Córdoba et al., 2021).

A barter economy is a nonmonetary economic system in which goods and services are exchanged based on a "double coincidence of want" (Starr, 1972). Barter-based economies are one of the earliest, predating monetary systems and even recorded history. People have successfully used barter almost in every field, but later, it was shifted to gold- or silver-based transactions and slowly toward defined currency-based transactions (Dalton, 1982; Starr, 1972). The traditional barter system has certain limitations compared to monetary transactions, such as a lack of a common measure of value and transactional inefficiencies (Starr, 1972). In a monetary transaction, as money is an established measure of value, equality matching is not an issue (Fiske, 1991). However, a traditional barter economy lacks a common measure of exchange, and equality matching becomes a challenging task, often leading to higher transaction costs (Starr, 1972). Moreover, the "unstructured" barter system mostly led to opportunistic behavior and exploitation by traders or resulted in dissatisfaction in transacting parties, affecting trust and prospects of future transactions. As a result, while the barter system had already existed in the rural marketplace historically, its scale diminished over time with increased reliance on monetary-based exchanges (Verma, 1980; Córdoba et al., 2021). Thus, we thought if some of the issues of the traditional barter system could be addressed by bringing a structured approach to the exchanges, it can improve fair-trading options and enable equality matching (Fiske, 1991), thus encouraging participation at a large scale.

To address the issues of common measures and equality matching, we came up with the idea of Livelihood Points (LPs).[1] LPs have money-like attributes in terms of providing a common measure of value, thus facilitating transactions. However, at the same time, as LPs could only be transacted within the village, they helped retain resources within the village itself. Thus, it addressed the issues of the traditional barter system and could also play an important role in the localization of market-based exchanges and retain the positives of barter in terms of the development of social cohesion and strengthening of the rural economy (Córdoba et al., 2021).

We devised a systematic approach to calculate the livelihood points for rural production and services. LPs can be calculated using multiple inputs such as the cost of raw material, time invested in producing the product, minimum wages of that region/state, producer's skill level, opportunity costs of resources used, and profit margin desired by the producer. These LPs were allocated a stored using the Android-based application developed by Drishtee to facilitate the exchanges.

As the modified barter system required access to the Android application, which is not generally accessible to the masses in the rural area, we decided to facilitate barter using an intermediary – a local woman entrepreneur called "Drishtee Mitra" (or Mitra). Mitra is a woman entrepreneur from the village who is acting as a change agent for the community and plays a vital role in making the rural economy less dependent on urban markets and enhancing its self-sufficiency. Below, we mention the key ideas of the modified barter system and the role of "Drishtee Mitra." Below are the steps involved in the barter-based transaction using the Android-based mobile application:

I. A producer registers his "haves" and "wants" in a system with the help of Drishtee Mitra functioning in that region.
II. Producers buy some LPs from Drishtee Mitra against the Gold standard products defined, which will be required to facilitate any barter transaction.
III. While registering products, the producer must explain all the input expenses along with the time taken to produce and calculates its cost of production.
IV. The Barter platform will match the haves and wants along with their COPs and initiate the deal, which will be facilitated by Drishtee Mitra.
V. Drishtee Mitra will inform both producers about this match and take their consent and lock the transaction in the system.
VI. Both producers leave their product at Drishtee Mitra's place, and their product is exchanged, and Mitra gets the facilitation fee in LP, which is credited in his mobile wallet.

[1] Digital social innovation (Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2021; Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qiu et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c, d, 2022b; Zainuddin et al., 2022) are designed to take into account local resources, practices and social norms (Qureshi et al., 2016, 2017, 2018a, b; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017; Sutter et al., 2023), and most often are structure to overcome various marginalization (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2020, 2022a) or environmental issues (Bansal et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2022)

3.4 Role of Diverse Actors in the Ecosystem

The barter-based transactions within the local rural economy assume the salient role of several actors at the ecosystem level, including producers, consumers, barter facilitators, skill development facilitators, logistic providers, and knowledge providers. Below, the key actors and their roles in the ecosystem are outlined:

Mitra, a women entrepreneur from the village, is a change agent. Her role is to register *producers and service providers* in the mobile application and allocate LP to them based on the calculated value of the product or services. The producers and service providers could be anyone from the village willing to engage in barter transactions and participate in the ecosystem. Further, Drishtee Mitra's role is to facilitate the barter transaction. They are also responsible to identify the logistic partner (called "*Dhavak*" from the local community) and help "*Gram Sahyogi*" (village associate) identify the possible skill learning centers in the villages, where the Drishtee team can arrange skill development training as per the demand of the local women and characteristics of the locality. Further, "Gram Sahyogi" with the help of Drishtee Mitra mobilizes local rural women with entrepreneurial orientation to attend training and subsequently form MEG (Micro Enterprise Groups). The members of the MEG are called *Vaibhavis*. Drishtee Mitra and Gram Sahyogi work together to help connect the registered producers with MEGs for the required raw material and facilitate the transaction. Further, Drishtee Mitra also provides necessary support to Gram Sahyogi in the formation of a village-level governance committee (called "*Swavlamban Samiti*"), which plays an advisory role to the different actors in the ecosystem.

Vaibhavis (members of the different MEGs) are the local women entrepreneurs who are willing to take risks and come forward to engage in various value chain activities, including production, packaging, and to some extent sales and marketing. These women are willing to invest in simple machines, which they can operate with their hands and process raw materials into finished products to make them more marketable. *Drishtee* helps these Vaibhavis by providing them with skill-based training, linking them with marketplaces, and providing functional knowledge like bookkeeping, capacity planning, etc.

While production and processing activities create livelihood opportunities, we realized that *Vaibhavis* always look to sourcing their raw materials or accessories locally. For example, if they set up a cheese-making unit, they would not only source their milk locally but also ensure that they find local and natural replacements for costly animal feed supplements. Similarly, their own garden is devoid of chemical fertilizer and mostly uses cow dung, vermicompost, etc. Therefore, it became evident to us that there is a huge potential for livelihood generation in villages by creating interdependence among the rural producers and consumers. As a social intermediary, we are only required to identify these interdependencies and ignite the spirit of "*Swavlamban*" (i.e., self-reliance) in rural women. The concept of "*Swavlamban*" was understood by us as interdependence among the villagers to achieve self-reliance. We believed that this "*Swavlamban*" could trigger

transformative changes in terms of the creation of livelihood opportunities and enhancing shared prosperity in the villages.

Further, Drishtee revisualized its role as an enabler of the rural ecosystem so that the "Swavlamban" could be attained by the rural communities without becoming heavily dependent on the urban markets for accessing goods that are not available in the local market (e.g., raw materials for detergent powders or other processed goods). As local rural production is quite fragmented, local MEGs may not get the benefits of economies of scale in purchases and incur huge costs in transportation. To respond to such threats, we established a rural distribution model to provide access to physical goods for the villagers in remote areas. Our divisional offices procure and maintain an inventory of such goods from nearby urban areas. The goods are then taken into remote villages of 1000–3000 people in delivery vans by our field agents on pre-mapped routes and supplied to rural retail points (RRPs). When aggregated, these RRPs constitute a comprehensive rural retail infrastructure, and we currently have more than 13,000 active RRPs in our network. Typically, the smaller population sizes of these remote villages and the transportation costs make this last-mile distribution cost prohibitive, and manufacturer supply chains do not reach well into these areas. However, at Drishtee, we are able to effectively aggregate the demand of villagers on one side and the product portfolios of numerous manufacturers on the other, providing the network scale necessary to make the model sustainable.

Overall, we believe that the "structured" barter system along with other ecosystem-level interventions in the rural economy will enable the self-reliance of the local community. We believe that this will lead to real "Swavlamban," where local enterprises and livelihood opportunities will be developed without much dependence on external or urban markets.

3.5 Organizing to Enable Village Self-Reliance ("Swavlamban")

I often thought that the hardest part of reaching a social goal is not the one identifying the right path but driving the organization to tread that path. In our case, managing a large social organization like Drishtee has been a challenge. After a few years since we changed our focus from urban to rural areas, we realized that while our dreams were about building and supporting rural communities, our approach was still like corporations. Our human resources, training methods, language, and tools were extremely corporatized. In the initial days, our focus was to develop expensive monitoring systems, but their implementation often came at the cost of opportunities to build trust. In the pursuit of monitoring and control, we lost opportunities to build trust with our stakeholders. As we realized the flaws in our organizing principles, we started changing our value system. We had the absolute resolve to develop an organization that espoused values similar to the ideal village community in terms of

trust, reciprocity, integrity, and self-sufficiency. We started experimenting with the idea of self-managed teams (SMTs) (Goodman et al., 1988; Napathorn, 2018). We organized Drishtee as a larger community of several geography-based SMTs. The common responsibilities of a team are divided among the team members who could take decisions independently keeping the broader organizational guiding principles in mind. Performance appraisal is conducted as a team. The role of top leaders, thus, has become enablers who work continuously to improve the effectiveness of the SMTs by profiling the team's skills and helping team members develop complementary skills (Gupta et al., 2011). We believe that this organizing model resonates well with our idea of developing self-reliant village communities.

3.6 The Path Ahead: Imparting Skill and Knowledge to Make the Ecosystem Self-Sustainable

Learning and experimentation have been some of the core values of Drishtee. We reflect on our experiences and learn from them to decide our future pathways. During recent reflections, we realized that Drishtee can build on its strength in training and skill development to improve the sustainability of the rural ecosystem. Further, we again drew inspiration from Gandhi's "*Nai Talim*" to reconceptualize our role as integrators of knowledge and work such that we can enable rural communities to sustain their livelihoods and become self-reliant.

3.6.1 Drishtee's Model of Skill Building

Skilling for livelihood is a continuous activity. A sustainable livelihood is ever-evolving. Drishtee is a national skill development corporation (NSDC) partner and has trained and skilled more than 10,000 youths in rural areas in various disciplines, such as information technology, farming, textile, construction, and other non-farming activities, over the last two decades. The maximum number of these trainees has paid a significant portion of their monthly income to acquire the necessary skills. Delivery of such training programs presently happens through Drishtee franchisee-owned centers. For most of the 22 years of its operations, Drishtee has scaled through a franchising model to impart skill and education. We have tried various micro business models ranging from E-Governance and health to banking at various levels of success or failure. However, one of the building blocks of Drishtee has been the training (skill) franchising model wherein a trained rural youth plays the franchisee's key role in offering training courses to the rural people on a revenue-sharing basis. Drishtee has now augmented its model by adding various training programs, approved by a national open standard, which aim at building rural livelihood skills. Several of these skills impart entrepreneurial capabilities to the rural youth. We constantly strive to integrate our training and skill development

model with the rural ecosystem to enhance its sustainability. In order to strengthen our presence and enable rural communities, we have again drawn inspiration from Gandhi's idea of "*Nai Talim.*"

3.6.2 Implementing "*Nai Talim*"

Nai Talim is a method of integrated learning that combines knowledge and work first proposed by Mahatma Gandhi. In the Gandhian view, the primary aim of education is toward the development of "human personality," which includes mind, heart, body, and spirit. The purpose of education also includes helping individuals understand their own responsibilities toward society. Gandhi Ji formulated and propounded the scheme of Nai Talim (New Education) through his newspaper "Harijan" in 1937. The scheme was based on the philosophy of education, which he had developed through experiments conducted in South Africa and India (Sabarmati and Sevagram). The scheme was based on the idea of comprehensive personality development and was founded based on four key principles: (a) learning and education be imparted in the mother tongue, (b) learning to be linked with vocational work, (c) work be linked with useful vocational needs of the locality, and (d) work should be constructive, with utility for the society.

Drishtee has recently started implementing the key ideas of *Nai Talim* (Patil & Sinha, this volume) in its approach to develop capabilities in rural areas. We see this form of education as a tool for engaging and structuring the community. The first step is to initiate this innovative form of learning by providing value-added, vocational, and activity-based education for village kids. Such education can be provided within or outside school hours. In the second step, more focused, commercial training in the field of agriculture, agro-processing, construction, and textile can be provided to the village adults. During the training, the formation of groups can be encouraged for taking up production and can be structured in small producer groups. The resulting micro-enterprises can follow the Model Village Plan and provide a much-needed economic boost to the rural economy. Moreover, these smaller groups can federate to form a central Model Village Organization, which can look at larger community issues such as infrastructure growth, health, and education. The same federation can also become the center for governance and society in the longer run.

4 Conclusion

When Drishtee started as a social enterprise, we had little appreciation for how social entrepreneurship could be inspired by Gandhian thoughts. However, as we reflect on our journey of the last 20 years, we realize that our successes, failures, and learnings are deeply connected with the values and views of Gandhi. His teachings

on the necessities and prospects of sustainable rural life and livelihood are becoming more relatable day by day with our increasing attachment to the villages. "India lives in villages" was a phrase that he coined in an era wherein urbanization was just beginning in India. Its value can hardly be understood by a generation that has mostly lived in the cities. However, during COVID-19, when the media was replete with images and videos of economically challenged walking on highways with their limited belongings, there was a sudden realization of the relevance of this phrase. It reminded us that villages are still "home" for most of the migrants. Thus, our motivations to follow the paths suggested by Gandhi to improve the sustainability of rural lives have become stronger. We constantly strive to strengthen the rural ecosystem and make rural communities self-reliant.

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Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir

Ajay Mehta and Suraj Jacob

1 Introduction

Seva Mandir is an organization that works with disadvantaged sections of society, especially small peasant communities living in the undulating tracts of the Aravalli hills in the districts of Udaipur and Rajsamand in India's Rajasthan state. Continuous engagement in one area has shaped Seva Mandir's thinking about how we may enable people to lead dignified lives, get organized to make democracy work, and, most importantly, become trustees of just and sustainable development.[1] At every stage in Seva Mandir's life history, there have been multiple views, if not conflicting ones, about how best to achieve these goals. The choices made may well have been suboptimal, but the future remains open to fresh ways to bring about more egalitarian and democratic arrangements for those who lead precarious lives. This chapter identify some themes that might offer insights about overcoming poverty, polarization, and disempowerment in our society (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Maurer &

Many of the ideas in this chapter were inspired by conversations with several individuals and groups over the years. We acknowledge particularly the insights from Hemraj Bhati, Neelima Khetan, Sarah Robinson, Priyanka Singh, Ronak Shah, Shankar Ramaswami, and Uday Mehta. Ajay Mehta also thanks the scores of individuals at Seva Mandir and villagers in its *karma bhoomi* who have influenced him over several decades.

[1] For a recent narrative of Seva Mandir's journey, see Khetan (2022).

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Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018b, 2020, 2022a; Sutter et al., 2023; Zainuddin et al., 2022), and lessons for emerging models, such as social infomediaries (Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2017, 2018a; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017), environmentally responsible businesses (Bansal et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2022), social entrepreneurship (Bhatt 2017, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2013, 2019, 2022, 2023; Hota et al., 2019, 2023; Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013a, b; Qureshi et al., 2016, 2023), sharing economy for the marginalized (Bhatt et al., 2021; Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qiu et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c), and technoficing (Qureshi et al., 2021d, 2022b, this volume) to nurture the resilient communities (Bhatt et al., this volume-a) and find a way forward to cultivate self-reliant communities (Bhatt et al., this volume-b).

2 Background and Discourse

Gandhian ideas and practices have had a profound impact on Seva Mandir as an institution. As a young man in Allahabad, the founder of Seva Mandir, Dr. Mohan Sinha Mehta (Bhai Sb. as he was popularly known) wanted to join the national movement. Although circumstances forced him to return to his hometown of Udaipur in 1922 to join the administration of the princely state of Mewar, he did not give up his aspiration to contribute to the national movement. Sometime in the late 1920s, it began to crystalize in his mind that he locates himself in the Gandhian tradition of constructive programs. His pre-disposition to this tradition can be gleaned from an essay he wrote in 1956. He had this to say about persuading Shri Kalu Lal Shrimali[2] to join Vidya Bhawan School as its first Headmaster. Bhai Sb started Vidya Bhawan in Udaipur in 1931.

> In the beginning of that year, the Civil Disobedience Movement under Gandhiji's leadership had submerged the entire country. One morning came a long letter in which Shrimali asked for permission to join the Non-Cooperation Movement. He said it was impossible for him to apply his mind and energies coldly to studies when all round the fervour for the freedom movement swayed the minds of youth. He could not work with any peace of mind. I sent a telegram asking him to come to Udaipur for personal discussion. Two or three days later he arrived. We were joined by a third friend, K.L. Bordia, who was associated all along with us in our aspirations for social work. I put it to Shrimali whether it would satisfy him to devote his life to work of social reconstruction, something of as great value and importance for national freedom and regeneration as (though perhaps less spectacular than) the political struggle for self-governance. (Vidya Bhawan Society, 1960)

Vidya Bhawan School was designed to impart an education that would encourage critical thinking, alongside democratic, egalitarian, and pluralist values. The central concern was to build the character of students so that they become responsible citizens. Seva Mandir, though conceived at the same time as Vidya Bhawan, saw its practical realization after independence. Bhai Sb. continued to see constructive programs as relevant to the quest for "Swaraj" or freedom beyond political independence from colonial rule (Koulagi, 2022). He could see that the poor in society

[2] Dr. K.L. Shrimali was to become India's Education Minister in 1954.

needed more than a paternalistic welfare state to empower and serve their needs of dignity (Mehta, 1983; Ramaswami, 2002; Rodrigues, 2018).

The early years of Seva Mandir were devoted to promoting adult literacy among villagers in the hinterland of Udaipur City. Many of them were *adivasis* (indigenous communities) and lived in remote villages unconnected by metalled roads. The idea behind promoting adult literacy and awareness was that villagers should be able to participate in mainstream processes of development and democracy. Perhaps at the back of Bhai Sb's mind was Gandhiji's quest of making ordinary people moral agents for their own well-being and that of the common good (Erikson, 1993; also see Bhatt et al., this volume-a, b). Within a short period of time, through the decade of the 1970s Seva Mandir's adult literacy work expanded to agricultural extension programs, relief activities in times of drought, and building small village associations (*samuh*s). Seva Mandir also encouraged villagers to participate in the 1978 elections to the village councils (*Panchayat*). In these elections, many villagers associated with Seva Mandir programs were elected to the Panchayats. The expectation that their presence in Panchayats would make these institutions responsive to the needs of the most disadvantaged was, however, belied. Panchayats were embedded in the hierarchical structures of the State. They lacked the resources and cultural capital to respond to the needs of the most oppressed in society.[3]

Seva Mandir's response to the limitation of statutory bodies in the mid-1980s was to intensify its constructive programs (Khetan & Mehta, 2009; Mehta, 2000). There were two related ideological justifications for Seva Mandir's strategy of deepening and expanding the scope of its constructive programs. The first was the idea of "Gram Swaraj," a multivalent concept about agency and responsibility being located in individuals and local communities where relationships of trust lead to justice and well-being (Govindu & Malghan, 2016). The second was the image of the State as a "soulless machine." Gandhi (1948, 2) observes about the State: "… although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress. … The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine…."

In the mid-1980s, both the national and international contexts were conducive for nongovernment institutions to contribute to development work. After the Emergency[4] was lifted in 1977, there was an ideological shift from State authoritarianism to the State acknowledging the value of people's participation in promoting voluntary organizations and democratic decentralization in governance. Internationally also, more aid was available to the nongovernment sector. In this positive environment, Seva Mandir was able to create significant capacity to execute programs of development independent of the State and operationalize its strategy of people-centric development and governance.

However, by the mid-1990s, Seva Mandir realized that its strategy was not making headway. The challenge was that indigenous communities were fragmented and

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[3] For a discussion of the "statification" of local governments and low capacity and autonomy compromising the potential for emancipatory justice, see B. Jacob and Jacob (2021); S. Jacob and Jacob (2022).

[4] In 1975 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had declared a state emergency and suspended the Constitution.

not able to put their common interests above individual needs. They sought benefits from power brokers and State functionaries on terms that were disempowering and that increased dependence. One pernicious mechanism for the fragmentation of village solidarity and self-governance was the privatization of the commons—pastures, water bodies, and forests—as a quid-pro-quo for votes at the time of elections. To overcome the development impasse in which Seva Mandir found itself, it turned reflexively to the Gandhian insight that overcoming one's internal contradictions was the way to gain ethico-politico agency to counter political emasculation and social fragmentation (Bilgrami, 2021; Mehta, 2000).

From the mid-1990s onward, Seva Mandir focused on facilitating dialogues among villagers to free themselves of relationships of dependence. Over time Seva Mandir's frontline workers along with enlightened village counterparts were able to persuade villagers to give up individual encroachments on the commons and come together to rebuild their capacity for cooperating with each other across social distinctions of caste, gender, class, and religion(see Ghatak et al., this volume; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Javeri et al., this volume). Now, after more than 25 years of this approach, there is no gainsaying the fact that people at the grassroots are capable of "*Satyagraha*" to achieve their aspirations to create just social arrangements and seek dignity and well-being in their lives. Some of these village cases have been documented in the volumes *Decolonising the Commons* (Bhise, 2004) and *Land, Community, and Governance* (Ballabh, 2004).

Another feature of Gandhian thought that has informed Seva Mandir is that its constructive work programs are not elite-driven. Since the mid-1980s, the policy of Seva Mandir has been to design its programs around the skills, knowledge, and dignity needs of all sections of society—be they villagers, the lower middle classes, or western-educated professionals. This strategy has not only given Seva Mandir deep roots in the communities where it works, but it has also made the staff members and village people feel "trusteeship" over the idea of social transformation.[5]

What follows is an account of Seva Mandir's praxis over the last 55 years. It describes the challenges and many collaborations—including with international donors, idealistic volunteers, and academics—that have kept Seva Mandir reflexive and given it vitality.

3 Seva Mandir's Praxis

3.1 Early History of Seva Mandir

Seva Mandir has been working in the field of rural development in Udaipur among rural communities and disadvantaged sections of society for over five decades. It was conceived at a time when the national movement for independence had taken

[5] For Gandhi's idea of "trusteeship," see Iyer (1986). This is one of several Gandhian ideas that have been critiqued from modernist perspectives; for a nuanced understanding of how these are somewhat misplaced, see Lal (2008b).

on distinct Gandhian hues, involving the peasantry and working class. As a revenue officer in princely Mewar, Bhai Sb. was aware of the plight of peasants suffering from oppression and poverty. His thinking on democracy and development was influenced by many sources over the decades: studies in Agra and London, participation in the Seva Samiti Movement (Allahabad) and the Scout Movement, exposure to the functioning of princely states of Rajasthan, engagement in the work of Vidya Bhawan with a belief in organic education and preparation for enlightened citizenship, ambassadorships and international diplomacy, and involvement in higher education leadership. The foundation stone of Seva Mandir was laid in 1931, but it became operational only in 1968 after Bhai Sb. retired as the Vice Chancellor of Rajasthan University in 1966 and returned to Udaipur. He was imbued with the spirit of tending to the local and facilitating local responses to local challenges—forging relationships of democracy and responsibility through the tradition of constructive work (Gandhi, 1968; see also Bhatt et al., 2022; Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume).

Seva Mandir's motto—*seva, sadhana, kranti*—indicates its founding values (Khetan, 2022). *Seva* stands for selfless service, drawing on many Indian traditions including Gandhi's path of *karma yoga*. *Sadhana* stands for dedication and devotion on the organizational path, in this case, the path of participatory and just development practice. *Kranti* stands for revolution in social relations and relations with the natural environment. The conjoining of *seva* and *kranti* suggests a creative approach to social action through the spirit of *sadhana*.

One major part of Bhai Sb's vision for the work of Seva Mandir was to create "Gram Swaraj" in the region: "I would work and try to convert Udaipur district into small but self-sufficient and autonomous republics and then get it recognized in the Constitution."[6] This was the dream he put to his colleagues in Seva Mandir two months before he passed away on June 25, 1985 at the age of 90.

The early years of Seva Mandir were devoted to creating adult education centers in villages in the vicinity of Udaipur. Slowly, this work expanded into the very remote parts of Udaipur district constituted by small *adivasi* (indigenous community) villages. These villages had no proper roads and few facilities such as schools, health clinics, and development infrastructure. The Seva Mandir team was constituted of idealistic people from different parts of the world. It was also a hub for local young men and women in need of meaningful work. They became the vanguard of Seva Mandir programs centered around adult education, agricultural extension, forestry, water conservation, and mobilizing village folk to practice self-help.

Bhai Sb. was comfortable with divergent ideological views among his colleagues, but he was clear that Seva Mandir should steer clear of partisan politics and violence. At the organizational level, there were forums where staff, at all levels, met to deliberate and review work. This was a mirror image of the structures created at the village level for villagers to deliberate on and promote the local common good. There was also a tradition for all the staff to gather annually in retreats to reflect on the purpose and strategies of Seva Mandir.

[6] Speech at Seva Mandir, 1985.

The decade of the 1970s was a pioneering period in the history of Seva Mandir. It was during this period that Seva Mandir put down roots in the interior parts of Udaipur district and evolved its core organizational culture and structure. The next phase of Seva Mandir was marked by the intensification of its development programs.[7] The decade of the 1980s was a period when national and international attitudes toward the voluntary sector changed for the better. International aid agencies and foundations diversified their aid programs to support the voluntary sector. At the national level, after the Emergency, there was a greater appreciation of democracy, Gandhian ideas, and the value of promoting voluntary organizations. Over time, a trend was set where irrespective of the government in power, there was policy support for promoting people's participation and the voluntary sector.

All these changes together made it possible for Seva Mandir to undertake development programs that enabled villagers to become the pivot of development in their local contexts. It allowed Seva Mandir to create community institutions and enable and train village-level workers to deliver services to their own people. A central aspect of this approach was also to seek the help of professionals especially where technical skills were concerned.

The idea of professionalizing rural development found resonance with philanthropic institutions like the Tata Trusts and the Ford Foundation. Ford gave Seva Mandir a grant to recruit professionals to improve its effectiveness and scale up operations. This enabled Seva Mandir to hire young professionals from institutions such as Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) (see Ghosh, this volume), Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA), Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), and the Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM). Seva Mandir also hired retired people from both the private and government sectors. The combination of professionals and a well-motivated cadre of grassroot workers gave Seva Mandir the organizational wherewithal to conduct effective programs of development.

3.2 *Doing Constructive Work and Developing Ethical Communities*

The presence of professionals and adequate funding led to the expansion of the constructive work programs of Seva Mandir. This shift was perceived by some in the organization as diluting Seva Mandir's commitment to holding the State accountable to its obligations to serve the people. They were disappointed that Seva Mandir was becoming more inward-looking and less invested in demanding accountability from the State.[8] For better or worse, Seva Mandir chose the path of developing its

[7] In the first part of the 1980s, prior to the intensification of constructive programs, Seva Mandir went through a period of personal and ideological differences among the top management. It survived this crisis partly due to the democratic sensibilities that were tended to at all levels in the organization and decisions made by the trustees on the question of leadership.

[8] For a discussion of the "rights turn" in India, see Ruparelia (2013) and Aiyar and Walton (2015). For empirical explorations of the slippages and realities in practice, see Gaitonde et al. (2020) and Dyer et al. (2022).

own constructive programs on the ground. These included primary school education, training of traditional birth attendants, public health, early childhood care, forestry, watershed and water conservation, and supporting self-help groups. It also had a strong women's program, including a women's artisan cooperative called Sadhna (Cummings & Ryan, 2014). In all these areas, elaborate structures were created to deliver services in villages.

One distinctive feature of the organizational arrangement toward development was to appoint grassroot workers from among the village people themselves. They were given modest stipends and were expected to participate in a variety of programs with support from Seva Mandir. In time to come, these workers provided leadership to their community organizations (Ballabh, 2004). Community institutions called Gram Vikas Samitis (Village Development Committees) were built around a village fund called the Gram Vikas Kosh (Village Development Fund). Funds for the Kosh were contributed by the villagers from their savings while undertaking constructive work programs with the help of Seva Mandir.

On the funding front, a dramatic shift occurred in 1989. The Interchurch Organization for Development Corporation (ICCO), a Dutch funding organization that was supporting Seva Mandir, went from supporting projects and programs to providing long-term institutional funding. This unusual funding perspective came out of a discourse in the Netherlands that argued that the devastation caused by colonization could only be reversed if there was a long-term commitment to building institutions dedicated to the service of the poor and their empowerment. It needs to be emphasized that this perspective is relevant even today as the post-independence development paradigm has displaced millions of forest dwellers and peasants from their traditional homelands—and even when it has not displaced people, market forces and State-led development have not strengthened disadvantaged communities to act in concert to promote their interests.[9]

The presence of stable funding irrespective of any project or program targets allowed Seva Mandir to deepen its commitment to participatory development and build community institutions. Seva Mandir was able to recognize contradictions internal to local communities that came in the way of their being able to cooperate with each other and pursue their aspirations for just social arrangements and dignified livelihoods. It became apparent to Seva Mandir that village folk is embedded in relationships of dependency and is fragmented along contemporary cleavages of power and patronage, not just around caste, class, and gender differences (Mehta, 2000). Seva Mandir felt that overcoming contradictions internal to disadvantaged communities was key to their empowerment and democratization (see also Kumar et al., this volume; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume).

One area where these contradictions are manifest is the management of the commons: forests, pastures, watersheds, and farming systems. It is standard practice for State functionaries and elected representatives to let villagers—both those who are

[9]Another reason for the ICCO's institutional funding approach was its protestant Christian culture that emphasized the prominence of the local community efforts and voices over those in positions of high authority and far away from the ground realities of the oppressed (Personal Communication with Abraham Van Leeuwen, Program Office for ICCO dealing with Seva Mandir in the 1980s).

better off and those who have modest means—occupy and informally privatize parts of the commons. This tendency has the effect of undermining a shared stake of local people in the management of the commons. Seva Mandir decided to counter this tendency and started a dialogue among peasants for them to reconsider this form of land management based on unstable and nontransparent property rights. To give impetus to this effort, Seva Mandir created the *Van Utthan Sangh*, a federation of village forest committees, to spearhead such dialogue. These efforts spread over decades of work have met with considerable success. The outcomes at their best are individuals and community institutions that act as trustees for just, democratic, and sustainable development. There is no gainsaying the fact that many such institutions turn derelict under pressure from vested interests and see their own leadership getting coopted by those who can offer them more power without accountability.

The response of the State to help villagers to decolonize the commons—that is, give up their individual encroachments and manage these lands as true commons—has been mute. Government-initiated programs such as Joint Forest Management were abandoned by the State Forest Department. Processing applications for getting community forest resource rights as per the 2006 Forest Rights Act are marked by delays that extend over years. Despite this, thousands of farmers have found it worthwhile to cooperate with each other and resist the lure of patronage. The significance of this is not just in terms of the better governance of these resources but also in strengthening grassroots democracy. The experience of working together to manage resources has prepared village communities to practice democracy on an everyday basis. It has also given them the experience of demanding accountability from themselves apart from the panchayat bodies and State agencies. In 2018, the Forest and Revenue Departments denied permission to the village panchayat of Amiwada to harvest a bamboo grove tended by Amiwada villagers and to transport the harvest for auction. The panchayat of Amiwada with the help of Seva Mandir had developed a forest in their pastureland. The bamboo plants, of which there were many, had reached the age for harvest, but no government agency was willing to give permission. No State body actually felt it was empowered to do so. Fed up and frustrated, the village people of Amiwada gave an ultimatum to the authorities that they would defy the law in case they did not get permission. In solidarity, 15 other villages also decided to join the satyagraha of Amiwada and cut bamboo "illegally." Two days before the cutting was to happen, the government granted permission.[10] The Amiwada satyagraha reflects Gandhi's idea of "Truth force," the idea that it is possible to create ethical communities who are willing to struggle for something larger than individual self-interest (Erikson, 1993; Lal, 2008a).[11]

[10] Seva Mandir had called a press conference a few days earlier to explain that even after 2 years no one in the government was willing to sign off on granting permission to cut and transport bamboos that had significant commercial value.

[11] Every year since 2000, Seva Mandir, in collaboration with the Umed Mal Lodha Memorial Trust, gives awards to villagers and village groups for their leadership roles in ensuring that forests are protected, livelihoods improved and people's wellbeing advanced. These awards are given in three categories: to individuals, to village groups, and to government forest protection committees. The

3.3 Measuring Impacts on Individuals and Communities

Another area in which Seva Mandir has excelled is in the quality of service delivery by way of programs in women's development, health care, early child care education, sanitation, and waste disposal—besides livelihood, water conservation, and forestry. In 1996, Seva Mandir was fortunate to meet Abhijit Banerjee,[12] a Professor of Economics at M.I.T., and invite him to Seva Mandir to do research. Along with Professor Michael Kremer, he visited Seva Mandir in December 1996 to design randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to identify interventions that have a high impact and are cost-effective. In 1997, Esther Duflo joined the research effort. The collaboration with Seva Mandir lasted 12 years and included multiple research studies in the Udaipur region (for instance, Banerjee et al. (2004). Their research pointed to large gaps in the impact of government programs and smaller gaps in the impact of Seva Mandir programs. But more importantly, their experiments showed how outcomes can be improved by designing interventions carefully after piloting them for their efficacy. The collaboration not only helped Seva Mandir to improve the specific designs of its ongoing programs but also helped create a culture in Seva Mandir of piloting projects before rolling them out at scale. Seva Mandir incorporated the idea of evidence-based impact studies of its programs. At the same time, it was mindful that technocratic changes cannot substitute for the role of individuals and the community to perform their duties and be accountable.

Seva Mandir's openness to research and to being studied led to several insights. A study from Canada's McGill University found that Seva Mandir's daycare centers had resulted in 43% of households utilizing this service. This led to mothers having an opportunity to work to supplement their income and also enjoy some free time. Another and more ambitious study conducted by Professor Raj Desai of Georgetown University and Dr. Anders Olofsgård of the Stockholm School of Economics tested the impact of cooperation on a range of development outcomes (Desai & Olofsgård, 2018). The study found a positive impact on natural resource management, conflict resolution and violence reduction (especially caste-based violence), satisfaction with public goods, democratic participation, and female empowerment. The evaluation was planned, designed, and conducted in collaboration with, but independently of Seva Mandir over several years starting in 2014.

4 Culture of the Organization

Perhaps, the most significant achievement of Seva Mandir lies in the nature of its gender and staff relations. Seva Mandir's staff body is diverse in terms of gender, education, social background, and geography. At any given time, it also has a pool of volunteers from India and across the globe.

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citations for each award read as profiles in courage of individuals and groups. The most remarkable stories of courage belong to women.

[12] Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer won the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2019.

It was in the mid-1980s, after constructive programs expanded, that Seva Mandir recognized that while having a diversity of talent was desirable, getting local staff to work with professionals as equals was not so easy. Local staff feared that they would be marginalized by the presence of professionals who could draw on higher levels of formal education and proficiency in English. They were unhappy at the induction of so many professionals all at once and expressed their disquiet in subtle ways of non-cooperation. On the side of the professionals, the lack of welcome and fraternity held the potential to erode their idealism. Fortunately, Seva Mandir sensed that it was a fraught relationship. It made efforts to explain to both groups that each was critical to the personal and professional growth of the other, and certainly to the betterment of Seva Mandir's work, and that neither group was more or less important than the other. Over time, as they worked together on multiple projects, their fears and anxieties dissipated. People across social differences get to know each other as individuals and not just in terms of their social identities.

What helped Seva Mandir greatly in finding the right balance of mutual regard is that some professionals who joined initially were role models in humility. They did not see their superior education or erstwhile seniority as retired public servants as an entitlement to special consideration. They reveled in work and not in the positions they held. On the side of the local staff, there were those who have the courage and foresight to recognize that the inclusion of professionals is good for the organization and its work and that it helps their career prospects. They dissuaded their colleagues from coming together to resist the inclusion of professionals.

One indication of this emerging culture was the appointment of a female Chief Executive in 1999. Although she was only 37 at the time, there was a broad-based acceptance among the staff about the appropriateness of the appointment despite the fact that she superseded many men who were older and more senior to her in the organization. The smooth transition in leadership was a measure of the fact that Seva Mandir had established a culture where leadership was not identified with authority. Field staff gave autonomy to village workers—and within the organization, those in senior positions gave space to those below them in the hierarchy.

On the side of gender and social relations, Seva Mandir has been fortunate. It has had women in leadership positions for a long time, almost since its inception. In the last three decades, for close to 20 years the Chief Executives have been women. Not only that, the majority of leadership positions have been held by women. There is no gainsaying the fact that having women in leadership positions has had a positive impact on gender relations. At another level, because many staff members—both men and women—have roots in traditional structures such as joint families, caste groups, and local communities, they have responded creatively to the challenges of modern development (meeting targets and exercising good management) while also respecting the rhythms of change that are characteristic of rural settings and small towns. They have been able to bring about more equal social relationships across caste, gender, and class hierarchies without creating disputes. Their intuitive attitude resonates with Gandhi's belief that justice is that which does not harm either party in a dispute. Seva Mandir staff know that in order to be effective, they need to be patient, willing to build consensus, and acknowledge traditional norms even

while trying to change them. As one of the review reports observed, Seva Mandir has balanced "feminine" and "masculine" attributes and has been able to get things done while at the same time carrying people along in the process (Aiyar et al., 2016):

> Feminine and masculine practices in tone are in an unusually good balance at Seva Mandir. By this we are referring not to the ways in which organizations work—nor to the gender balance in employment. Organizations that have a feminine way of working are usually those that work in a collective way, take time for consensus-building, are nurturing of their staff and make sure nobody is left behind. Organizations that have a masculine way of working are very good at meeting goals and targets, doing it on time and having data at the centre of decision-making. Ideally an organization should balance and integrate both ways of working. Too much feminine could lead to endless discussion and endless time required for decision-making. Too much masculine makes people feel they are not valued and that all that matters is to deliver on specific targets. Seva Mandir has both: a consensus-building culture (which was impressively quick in problem-solving together in the participatory sessions that we ran during the visit) combined with a focus on numbers and data which is commendable, and better than many of the large NGOs in India.

The bulk of Seva Mandir's staff is from the lower middle class. Very few of them have professional degrees, unlike their Western-educated counterparts from middle-class backgrounds. Often, initially, their motivation to join Seva Mandir is simply to get a job. Even though Seva Mandir is not able to compete with State institutions in terms of remuneration and status, over time people working for Seva Mandir develop a positive identity about themselves as NGO workers. Their jobs and careers in Seva Mandir have provided self-affirmation and pride. From the most junior to the most senior in the hierarchy of Seva Mandir, there is always the opportunity for creativity. They grow to respect Seva Mandir for being sincere in its efforts. They identify with its purpose, even as they may have their own complaints about low salaries and slow career prospects. Providing members of the lower middle class a sense of professional pride is one of Seva Mandir's greatest achievements. This contrasts with the frustration that many from their backgrounds feel when in their jobs they are neither respected nor can they respect their organizations and those who lead them. Those from middle-class backgrounds, as with those from lower-middle backgrounds, feel reaffirmed in Seva Mandir. It has given them a chance to express their talents and leadership qualities but also their idealism to be part of the project to fulfill the country's "tryst with destiny," in the famous speech by Jawaharlal Nehru at India's independence.[13]

5 Concluding Thoughts

Seva Mandir's experience in development suggests that there is a need for a paradigm shift in the way we think about development. It is not enough for the government to make large allocations of funds for poverty alleviation and rural development. What is

[13] The "Tryst with Destiny" speech was delivered by Nehru, the first Prime Minister, to the Indian Constituent Assembly in the hours leading up to August 15, 1947.

needed is that villagers themselves and civil society be empowered to play a significant role in the conceptualization, execution, and governance of development. In this approach of autonomous development, the differences in education and class backgrounds can give way to more wholesome identities of shared purpose.

At another level, Seva Mandir has also discovered that those who are oppressed are often complicit in their exploitation and disrespect.[14] They tolerate the poor quality of public goods such as health provision, education, and property rights, and the arbitrary behavior of authorities. They often seek benefits to which they are not entitled and thereby bend to those in power rather than seeking to transform their relationships. The challenge for development is to realign self-interest so that it supports rather than undercuts the common good—and is not about only improving individual well-being in terms of health, education, income, and so on. Seva Mandir has found that constructive work programs can bring this change. However, it needs time and patience and a vision for development that acknowledges the damage being done by "development" sans democracy as Gandhi understood it (*Swaraj*).

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Cultivating Women Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of SEWA

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> *The poor do not need charity; they need an enabling mechanism to strive and come out of the vicious circle of poverty and vulnerability.*
>
> *Ela Bhatt, Founder of SEWA*

1 Introduction

The subject of women's entrepreneurship has garnered much attention in recent years owing to its potential to foster sustainable growth, environmental stewardship, social inclusion, and gender equity (cf. Bansal et al., 2014; Bhatt, 2017, 2022; Hota et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2022). It is widely acknowledged that women's engagement in entrepreneurial activity can lead to various benefits, including improving capabilities, enhancing family well-being, and broadening socioeconomic gains (cf. Ansari et al., 2012; Haugh & Talwar, 2016; Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013a, b; London, 2016; Qureshi et al., 2021a, 2022a, b, 2023). Women's participation in entrepreneurship has been linked to an increase in their capabilities, such as their advocacy and leadership skills (Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023; Qureshi et al., 2023, this volume, Sutter et al., 2023). Entrepreneurship research in the marginalized context

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suggests that providing women opportunities to acquire new skills, knowledge, and experiences can enhance their personal and professional development (Ansari et al., 2012; Hassan et al., 2023; Datta & Gailey, 2012) and overcome marginalization they experience (Rosca et al., 2020; cf. Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018a, 2020, 2022a, 2023). Thus, engaging in entrepreneurial activities can provide women with a sense of empowerment and autonomy, which can contribute to their overall well-being and self-esteem.

Similarly, women's involvement in entrepreneurship has also been associated with improved family well-being[1] (Datta & Gailey, 2012; cf. Kumar et al., 2021; Shahriar & Shepherd, 2019). Women entrepreneurs can generate income and create employment opportunities, which can lead to higher household incomes and improved living standards for their families (Hazarika & Goswami, 2016; London, 2016). In this way, women entrepreneurs can serve as role models for their children and contribute to their education and development. Women's entrepreneurship has broader socioeconomic benefits. Women-owned businesses can contribute to economic growth and development by creating jobs, generating income, and driving innovation (Haugh & Talwar, 2016). Moreover, women entrepreneurs can help to address gender disparities and promote gender equality, which is a key component of sustainable development.

Despite these potential benefits, ensuring the participation of the most marginalized women in entrepreneurship remains a significant policy and ethical challenge (Bhatt, 2022; Hota et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., 2023). Women who suffer marginalization account of factors such as poverty, race, ethnicity, and intersectionality may face additional barriers to entrepreneurship, such as lack of access to capital, opportunities, and networks (Bhatt et al., 2019; Qureshi et al., 2023). Addressing these barriers and promoting inclusive entrepreneurship is crucial to ensure that the benefits of entrepreneurship accrue to women, their families, and marginalized communities. However, the participation of the most marginalized women in entrepreneurship remains a policy and ethical challenge that must be addressed to ensure that marginalized women benefit from entrepreneurship. We provide a more detailed account below.

2 Women Entrepreneurship in Marginalized Contexts

Women's empowerment is critical for economic development (Hechavarria et al., 2019; Kelley et al., 2017) and societal progress (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007), and research suggests that engaging women in entrepreneurial activities has the potential to generate financial and social value for the individuals and communities (Jamali, 2009; Niethammer, 2013). Indeed, because women face various forms of

[1] There are mixed findings about family well-being, as entrepreneurial initiatives by women in developing countries have been found to lead to tension within the family, and at times increase in domestic violence (Ahmed, 2005; Rahman, 1999).

social discrimination (Minniti & Naude, 2010; Qureshi et al., 2023, this volume) and have less control over resources (Bhatt et al., 2022, this volume-a; 2023; Qureshi et al., 2018b; Sutter et al., 2023), they are considered as one of "the poorer" sections of the society (Minniti & Naude, 2010, p. 278). Hence, developing their capabilities and skills through entrepreneurship can bring substantial personal as well as broader social and economic gains (Haugh & Talwar, 2016).

The importance of gender equality in creating equitable and sustainable societies is also recognized in the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015–2030), which aim to eradicate poverty, social exclusion, and environmental challenges. Engaging women in entrepreneurial activities has the potential to address the UN SDGs on gender equality and women empowerment (SDG 5).

The extant literature on entrepreneurship connects entrepreneurial activities with women's empowerment and emancipation (Calás et al., 2009; Rindova et al., 2009). Relatedly, in developing countries, women entrepreneurs are seen as the "vanguard of social transformation" (Prahalad, 2005,[2] p. 134; Rosca et al., 2020). Following the UN's agenda to reach gender equality by 2030, there has been a particular emphasis on the numerous advantages and ripple effects of supporting women's empowerment (United Nations, 2016; see Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Yang et al., 2020). The vast literature on gender and entrepreneurship also advocates for promoting women's entrepreneurship through capability-building programs (Bhatt et al., 2013, 2022; Bryan & Mendaglio, 2020; Costin et al., 2021; Mamo et al., 2023; Rodríguez et al., 2014; Sutter et al., 2023). Crucially, some of the arguments to promote women's entrepreneurship are rooted in the essentialist characteristics of women and the resulting belief that investing in women's well-being will improve societal well-being (Hendriks, 2019). For example, it is generally believed that women are altruistic by nature, and therefore, an empowered woman can use her capabilities for the betterment of society (Mestre et al., 2009; Rosca et al., 2020). Similarly, a stream of business ethics research characterizes women as more keen and capable of caring and offering social help to others (Gilligan, 1982; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Simola, 2005; Wethington et al., 1987). Furthermore, women are seen as less individualistic and more collectivistic than men (Cross & Madson, 1997; Hofstede, 2011; Lalwani & Shavitt, 2012) and often describe themselves in terms of their connectivity to others (Maurer & Qureshi, 2021). As collectivism assumes that people belong to a closely knit group that provides security and protection, it prioritizes group loyalty over personal individualistic achievement (Gelfand

[2] We acknowledge the critique of Prahalad's notion of bottom of the pyramid (Karnani, 2007; Qureshi et al., 2021d, endnote 1), and it is not our intention to see marginalized context as potential opportunity to make profit. We believe that marginalized communities, if provided opportunities to develop capabilities through using their indigenous knowledge and locale resources, can generate their own livelihoods and truly represent the foundation (base) of humanity. The focus of the base-of-the-pyramid initiatives should be to empowering these marginalized communities (Bhatt et al., 2021; Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2019, 2021; Parth et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qiu et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2016, 2017, 2018b, 2021b, c; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017; Zainuddin et al., 2022).

et al., 2004; Lalwani & Shavitt, 2012) and provides a rationale for facilitating women entrepreneurship.

In this chapter, we extend the existing work on women entrepreneurship by bringing insights from Gandhian philosophy. A Gandhian perspective on women entrepreneurship rejects the "masculine, industrial, and paternalistic" (George et al., 2023, p. 1) assumptions of dominant entrepreneurship theories and provides the foundation for nonviolent, caring, and compassionate entrepreneurship (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a, b; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume). We apply the Gandhian perspective to a social organization in India's Self-Employed Women's Association in India (SEWA), set up by Ela Bhatt in 1972. Intending to empower poor and marginalized women workers in the informal sector and develop self-reliance, SEWA has created almost 50 institutions for and with people experiencing poverty. Inspired by Gandhian principles, SEWA's core actions focus on the implementation of Gandhian principles. Specifically, its activities aim to organize self-employed women and enhance their collective power, cooperation, and leadership capabilities at the grassroots level through the establishment of associations and networks (cf. Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Javeri et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Qureshi et al., this volume). This strategy aims to facilitate their access to social security and advocate for improved standards of living and social protection for laborers (Chatterjee et al., 2021).

SEWA concentrates on developing capacity through education and professional training. Since its foundation, SEWA has continued to adhere to Gandhian values of *satya* (truth) and *ahimsa* (nonviolence) in creating self-reliant, equitable communities (cf. Bhatt et al., this volume-a, b). In this chapter, we first discuss the key principles from Gandhian economics and their relevance for entrepreneurship. We then provide an overview of SEWA and demonstrate how it enacts Gandhian principles in its mission, organizational structure, and practices. Further, we critically evaluate the impact of these practices and processes on women's empowerment. Our study also explores the challenges faced by SEWA during the COVID pandemic (2020–2021) and the measures taken by the organization to overcome those challenges. In the final section, we discuss the key insights from SEWA for entrepreneurship and women empowerment and show how these insights can be applied to different contexts.

3 Gandhian Economy

3.1 The Principles of Gandhian Economics

Gandhian economics is not recognized as a separate economic system within mainstream economic theories. However, as a philosopher and freedom fighter, Gandhi emphasized the importance of *Satya* (truth), *Ahimsa* (nonviolence), and *Aparigraha*

(nonpossession) (Kumarappa, 1951), with the latter being the key to achieving nonviolence (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Kumar et al., this volume). Other Gandhian principles that promote *Satya* and *Ahimsa* include *Sarvadharma* (integrating all faiths) and *Swadeshi* (propagating local employment and self-reliance) (Kumarappa, 1951). To assess whether an organization is truly Gandhian, it must be tested on these touchstones. Kumarappa, a close associate of Gandhi, was a pioneering economist who focused on rural and developmental economics. He explained Gandhian economic thought through five distinct groups, using the animal kingdom as an example of how natural resources are utilized.

The first group is the predatory group, which includes imperialist economies that take from nature without giving anything back. The parasitic group consists of capitalist economies that extract resources without preserving them. The enterprising group includes entrepreneurs who create personal wealth through the development of new products and solutions The gregarious group includes communal economies that produce more than they consume and share assets and produce among members. Finally, the service group includes economies where members work for others without expecting anything in return, driven by core values such as *Satya*, *Ahimsa*, and *Aparigraha*. While the service group shares some similarities with communism, the concept of nonpossession distinguishes it from collective possession and shared benefits (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Kumarappa, 1951). Overall, the service group aligns with Gandhian principles, and we explore how SEWA, an organization promoting women's economic empowerment in India, embodies these principles.

3.2 The Critique and Relevance of Gandhian Economics

Critics of Gandhian economic principles argue that they lack empirical support and share many similarities with socialist and communist economic thoughts. They assert that the focus on nonmaterial factors in individual utility functions, such as loving and caring relationships, is difficult to establish empirically and limits the creation of further propositions (Diwan, 1982; Ghosh, 2012; Koshal & Koshal, 1973; Javeri et al., this volume). This criticism highlights the challenge of applying Gandhian principles in a modern economic context and the need for further research to support or refute their effectiveness.

The Gandhian economic principles assume an idealized society. Applying the principles of equilibrium neo-classical economics, the existence and sustenance of such an idealized society depend on the condition where all agents in economic transactions follow the Gandhian economy of love and care (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume). When this condition is met, all agents of economic transactions also receive value for their efforts, creating a win-win situation (Mehta & Jacob, this volume; Mishra & Shukla, this volume; Solanki, this volume). Such an economy cannot be governed by any government but depends on collective participation within a community led by a trustee. Examples of the

application of Gandhian economic thought include the trustee-led cooperative movement and “Pay as you like” or “Pay for the next customer” type pricing mechanisms, both of which have seen mixed levels of success. While such economic entities have received mixed success in India, a wider range of applications of the Gandhian economy remains to be explored (Madan, 2007).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reevaluation of the classical economic system, with a growing interest in community-based economic models that prioritize altruism, trust, and self-reliance (English, 2021; cf. Simon, 1992). This has sparked a renewed interest in Gandhian economics and its potential applications in current economic systems. The emergence of community-owned initiatives and trust-based local economies (Bhatt, 2022; Pandey et al., 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017; Qiu et al., 2021) has provided evidence of the feasibility and success of alternative economic models (Bhatt et al., 2021; Dey & Sikder, 2022; Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2021), paving the way for the exploration of Gandhian economic principles in contemporary society. In the following sections, SEWA will be analyzed as an example of an organization that has successfully implemented Gandhian economic principles in the modern world.

4 Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA)[3]

SEWA is a membership model with women members coming from different trades. It follows four levels of governance. To expand the reach of SEWA and fulfill its dream to empower self-employed women all over the county, SEWA Bharat works toward integrating more and more women as its members all over the country. The role of SEWA Bharat is to strengthen smaller SEWAs, develop new SEWAs, facilitate linkage between SEWAs and NGOs, and build a national identity for SEWA.

4.1 SEWA Membership

SEWA charges a minimal annual membership fee for women workers. The members of SEWA are self-employed women from the four types of informal sectors comprising 106 trades (Self Employed Women’s Association, 2022b).

- Vendors and hawkers: These women sell products like vegetables, fruits, meats, fish, and other food items in unauthorized places like housing colonies, footpaths, or through the neighborhood.

[3] Most of the information about Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) has been sourced from their website https://www.sewa.org/. Unless specifically attributed to another source, it should be assumed that information is from this website.

- Home-based workers: Women who work from home produce products to sell in the market. These workers include artisans, weavers, and women who process products.
- Labor and service providers: These women work in construction sites, agriculture fields, and small factories. They also work as house help or waste collectors.
- Producers: They run small businesses like cattle rearers, salt farmers, and marginal farmers, among others.

4.2 SEWA Governance

As noted earlier, SEWA's constitutional structure comprises four levels (Self Employed Women's Association, 2022a). At the first level are the members from different trades. The second level of the constitutional structure is the Trade Committee for each trade. The trade committee is at two levels: district-wise trade committee and city-wise trade committee. These trade committees for a particular trade comprise leaders formed for each trade, and its members are the district-wise leaders and city-wise trade leaders of a particular trade, which are selected by the members. The meetings are held once a month to discuss trade-related issues and strategies. At the next level comes the Trade Council comprising elected representatives from the trade groups. For every 1500 members of a trade, one representative is elected based on voting. The final level of the constitutional structure is the Executive Committee, which comprises 25 elected members. The elected members are one president, three vice presidents, one general secretary, two secretaries, one treasurer, and the president from trade groups having the highest membership. The meeting is held every month to strategize policy-level issues.

5 Strategies Adopted by SEWA for Women Empowerment

Driven by Gandhian philosophy, the implementation strategies of SEWA are context-specific and start by recognizing the social and cultural barriers to inclusion. Intermediaries need to understand the communities and social contexts (Bhatt et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c, d), their resource constraints (Hota et al., 2019; Sutter et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., 2022a, b), and the ethical issues involved (Bhatt, 2022; Hota et al., 2023). Intermediaries have been able to successfully overcome negative social constraints through "recipient transformation" (Qureshi et al., 2018b), scaffolding, and technoficing (Qureshi et al., 2022a, b). SEWA tried to bring those changes by following a particular organizational structure. In the next sections, we first discuss the structure of SEWA, followed by its roles in various aspects of society.

SEWA contributes to women's empowerment by providing necessary tools for employment (Spodek, 1994). It develops the awareness and business capacity of the

members. SEWA also provides business development support. In addition to employment, SEWA also aims to improve the lifestyle of the members. It carries out these objectives through various cooperatives like the Indian Academy of Self-Employed Women (IASEW), SEWA Cooperative Federation, Mahila Housing Trust, etc. Various measures toward different dimensions of women's empowerment are discussed in the following section.

5.1 Awareness Development

SEWA creates awareness through three mediums: "Anasooya," "Radio SEWA," and "RUDI no Radio." Anasooya is a bimonthly magazine that promotes the work of SEWA members with other self-employed and informal workers over the country by sharing their work, experience, and viewpoints. These mediums help others to learn about SEWA and to create a support network for self-employed women. Awareness among its members regarding the activities of SEWA is spread through video recordings produced by VideoSEWA, which was established in 1984. It is also a means to train its members regarding various activities and programs. In 2002, it registered the cooperative Shri Gujarat Mahila Video Sewa Mahiti Communication Sahakari Mandali Limited with the mission to produce educational videos and guide the members in their business.

Radio SEWA is an educational medium to reach the remotest villages where they can discuss their problems and leanings. It is also used to educate the members about government policies and schemes that might help them in their business and livelihood. RUDI no Radio is a community radio program started in 2005. The program is broadcasted every Saturday from 8 to 8.15 p.m. on the Ahmedabad-Vadodara area on All India Radio. It was originally a 15-min show where Rudiben conducted informal talks with the members of SEWA on the challenges that they face as women and as laborers. These informal talks help to take the story of the women worker to the masses and make people realize the difficulties faced by women workers in day-to-day life. Over time, the episodes started to deal with various topics like nutrition, insurance, health, education, environment, communal harmony, agriculture, traditional art and crafts, seasons, festivals, and more. The estimated number of listeners of the show is 500,000 weekly.

5.2 Capacity Building

SEWA believes every woman has the ability and potential to succeed as an entrepreneur (Bhatt, 2008; Blaxall, 2004). It focuses on developing its members' skills so that they can perform the activities required in establishing and running their businesses (Paromita et al., 2020). SEWA accomplishes this through different cooperatives and sister companies. These cooperatives develop the capability of their

members by focusing on management techniques, production optimization, new technologies, and digital inclusion, among others (Herbel, 2010). All the members of SEWA can take these capacity-building sessions. The events are organized by the cooperatives, and the members are informed of the sessions through the trade committee or trade council. Based on the above discussion, we can clearly see Gandhian principles at work. For instance, the cooperatives are based on the idea of trusteeship (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume), and the education and training of the cooperatives' members are motivated by the ideas of *Nai Talim* or Basic education (Holzwarth, 2016; Patil & Sinha, this volume). Similarly, the focus on inclusion (e.g., digital inclusion) and providing learning and development opportunities to all members of the cooperatives are based on the Gandhian idea of equality (Diwan & Gidwani, 1979). The different cooperatives working in the capacity building of members are discussed below.

5.2.1 Leadership Capabilities

SEWA develops the leadership capabilities of its members through Member Education, which is followed by the SEWA Movement Training. After this, a higher form of leadership training is provided by initiatives like Kadam Training & Training of Trainers.

Member Education is the backbone of leadership development and helps women recognize their potential and impact on the country's economic development. They are identified as women workers and are presented as an integral component in the country's socioeconomic development. It is the first step of developing leadership capabilities as the members gain confidence in themselves. SEWA Movement Training is a two-day program organized by in-house trainers to incorporate leadership qualities among the members so that they can become leaders and better run their businesses. This training also helps the members to understand the principles and philosophy of the SEWA movement and the organization and make them capable of leading SEWA in the future.

Kadam Training is an advanced leadership four-day program where capacity building is provided to the best performers of SEWA Movement Training. The members are provided with exhaustive knowledge of SEWA's different activities. After Kadam Training, the leaders are provided with a "training of trainers" course so that they can become trainers and continue to enhance the leadership qualities of fellow members.

5.2.2 Professional Programs

The members are provided cooperative training, communication training, and managerial skills development training to facilitate them in their business. Cooperative training is provided to impart marketing and technical skills to rural members to enable them to perform their entrepreneurial activities smoothly. Communication

training helps the members develop communication skills vital in every phase of life. Communication skills go a long way in efficiently running the business. Additionally, it enables the members to properly communicate their needs, concerns, experiences, and stories with the people so that people are aware of their struggles and they develop a sense of working together with people for mutual growth. Various writing, photography, and video training workshops are organized so that the members can adequately perform their business's documentation activities.

"SEWA Manager Ni School" (SMS) is a learning center to impart managerial skills required to run a business among women members. Through SMS training, members learn about the basic requirement of concepts of business relating to finance, operations, and marketing. SMS has helped members grow their businesses by improving their knowledge of planning and performance evaluation methodologies and increasing their budgeting capabilities. The members have shown an increase in confidence as they have more control over their business and have good knowledge of their rights, particularly ownership concerns. SEWA established the Community Learning and Business Resource Center (CLBRC) at the village level, where the training is provided. In collaboration with various government bodies, academic institutes, and corporate and technical firms, SMS has also developed an online learning portal to teach several managerial skills to the members. The members are given online training on mobile literacy, digital banking, virtual meeting platforms, entrepreneurship, community building, etc.

5.3 Business Development Support

5.3.1 Facilitating New Business Frontiers

SEWA Trade Facilitation Centre (STFC) forms the mediator between the artisans and the global market. These informal workers are their companies' producers, owners, shareholders, and managers. Their goal is to improve the socioeconomic status of the rural craftswoman by ensuring security and a fair share of their work. They provide the artisans with production optimization, marketing strategies, and integrated supply chain to improve their business output (Sinha, 2013). It deals in products from apparel, accessories, and home furnishing categories. In addition to white label and wholesale, STFC has developed a national fashion brand Hansiba.

With the decline of the waste recycling industry, the women's waste picker cooperative faced an imminent shutdown. It was then that Gitanjali was born, and the cooperative started to manufacture stationery products from recycled waste and generated an income for its members (Buvinic et al., 2017). Thus, a new life was breathed into the dying cooperative. Slowly, the members are transitioning from informal to formal and are gaining a dignified status in society.

SEWA Ecotourism, a cooperative that deals with ecotourism, was established in Ganeshpura. The women of Ganeshpura village formed the members of this

cooperative. The ecotourism park was developed on a 10-acre plot from the village panchayat. The land was useless and filled with dangerous snakes and reptiles. The members of the cooperative cleaned the land. They formed an ecotourism farm comprising a serene desert atmosphere experience, camel ride, rare bird watching, children's park, musical performances, and traditional games through which the village women could generate a livelihood. The farm also offers several products, including unique ethnic spices, organic vegetables, and organic food and beverages.

5.3.2 Financial Support

The members of SEWA could not access the formal financial assistance required to buy raw materials and build assets and cash flow for smooth day-to-day operations provided by banks and other formal financial institutions (FIs) as they would not lend them money due to a lack of credibility (Berg, 2010). To overcome these constraints, SEWA members are forced to rely on informal sources of financial provision to satisfy their needs, such as village moneylenders, other value chain actors (e.g., input suppliers), family, and friends. These informal services usually exploit the members through high-interest rates and less flexible terms (e.g., rigid repayment periods and interest rates). Thus, to provide access to the formal financial institution to its members, SEWA Bank, a micro-finance institution, was incorporated in 1974. In addition to loans from businesses, the SEWA bank also provides savings, recurring and fixed deposits, and pension facilities.

5.3.3 Marketing Support

SEWA Gram Mahila Haat (SGMH) is a charitable marketing organization registered in 1999. It works toward providing services to rural and informal workers to improve their business sales. SEWA members can avail of these facilities to promote and improve the reachability of their products, leading to exploring new selling opportunities and making more profit. The initiatives of SGMH have a clear focus toward the growth of these rural businesses by helping in their expansion, which can be seen as the application of Gandhi's *Swadeshi* and the empowerment of these individual rural units resonates with Gandhi's *Sarvodaya* where people's empowerment is given priority (Ashok, 2022; Diwan & Gidwani, 1979).

5.3.4 Operations Support

SEWA provides operations support through access to low-cost raw materials. It opened a thread distribution center to provide threads at reasonable rates for the workers, which forced the nearby shopkeepers to decrease the price of threads and gave an alternative option of buying thread at a reasonable cost. SEWA also provides IT solutions to its members at an affordable price so that the members can take

benefit of digital technologies to strengthen their business through its NirmanSEWA initiative. The members can use their services to include modern technological solutions in their business or develop an online experience through websites and marketing. It also established Rural Distribution (RUDI) in 2004 by the farmers and for farmers to develop a rural distribution network for small and marginal farmers. Its objective is to provide food security to farmers and form an integrated food value chain that will reduce the hardships of the farmers in producing high-quality agricultural products (Cheng et al., 2012). It has 2,00,000 farmers as stakeholders, 11 processing centers, 3500 RUDIbens, and 1500 employees. "*Behen*" or "*ben*" is a term used in India that means "sister." The women workers are termed RUDIbens to show respect toward them and identify them as sisters.

SEWA aims to develop its members' living conditions by providing women's basic requirements like healthcare, child care, insurance, and housing (Blaxall, 2004). The various measures taken by SEWA in this direction are discussed below.

5.3.5 Healthcare Facilities

Informal workers generally do not have access to good medical facilities due to a lack of availability and affordability (Blaxall, 2004; Sinha, 2008). To solve this problem for the members, Shri Gujarat Mahila Lok Swasthya Sewa Sahakari Mandali Ltd. health cooperative was established in 1990. It aims to provide life-saving health services and medicines to the poor at an affordable price. It also aims to provide basic education and awareness regarding health issues and hygiene. The cooperative has partnered with many governments and private health providers to attain its goal.

5.3.6 Child Development

SEWA's cooperative Sangini registered in 1984 established childcare centers so that children of age 0–6 years can be taken care of while their mothers go off to work. The responsibility of these centers is to look into the nutrition, health, education, and capacity building of children. This facility helps the members concentrate on their work while ensuring their child is safe, which has led to double the income of the women workers. In 2022, Sangini operates, 11 childcare centers that cater to 350 children, with each center having a maximum of 35 children (SEWA Sangini Cooperative: Providing Child Care for Women Informal Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic in India, 2022). Akashganga is a magazine club founded in 1966 where the daughters of members participate as writers, artists, and editors of the monthly magazine, thus enabling their creative growth. They contribute through quizzes, puzzles, and articles from different fields.

5.3.7 Insurance Facility

National Insurance VimoSEWA Cooperative Ltd. was incorporated in 2009 and provides insurance facilities to informal workers. The aim of VimoSEWA is to provide financial protection to its members and their families in case of wage loss, hospitalization expenses, and death (Sinha, 2006). Appropriate products pertaining to workers are designed that are aimed at developing financial sustainability, solidarity, and self-help for them. The policies include Saral Suraksha Yojna, Life Coverage Scheme, Swastha Pariwar, and Saving Link Scheme, among others.

5.3.8 Housing Facility

With the vision of providing houses for informal workers, SEWA Grih Rin Limited (Sitara) was incorporated in 2011 to provide affordable housing loans. The loan amount varies from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1,200,000 (US$ 603 to US$ 1447) and is distributed for a tenure of 20 years.

Mahila Housing SEWA Trust deals with improving the habitat of the informal women workers and has taken initiatives to improve the environment of the places where they live. It has taken measures like developing the slum through Slum Networking Program (SNP), providing electricity through Ujjala Yojna, and promoting the use of renewable energy through the Hariyali Project.

The objective of SNP is to improve the living condition of women by upgrading the slums. It is operational in Ahmedabad and is a partnership involving slum communities and their community-based organizations (CBOs), the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and participating private sector organizations (Sinha, 2013). It provides means for developing drainage, waste management and sewage, road construction, and lighting and water connection in the area.

Ujala Yojna program, with the help of the electricity provider board in Ahmedabad (Ahmedabad Electricity Board), has provided legal electricity to more than one lakh houses from the slums of Ahmedabad (Sinha, 2013). The project also educated the poor on the use of energy-efficient appliances so that electricity consumption is low.

The Haryali project is an effort to provide easy financing to the members for buying fuel-efficient cooking appliances (Mittal & Bhattacharjee, 2017). This aims to decrease the time taken and the cost of cooking. It also aims to promote solar lanterns and decrease the dependency on electricity and kerosene. The project aims to reduce wood burning and the use of fossil fuels and contribute to the larger goal of green livelihood for its members.

5.3.9 Cultural Programs

With the aim of developing extracurricular activities and promoting peace and solidarity, various cultural programs are organized. The different event emphasizes the diversity of our country and its rich culture, which includes dance and music from different regions of the country and plays portraying our nation's history.

6 SEWA in Tackling COVID Impact on Its Members

COVID-19 had a disastrous effect on economic and social development (Bhatt et al., this volume-a; Moolakkattu, this volume). Undoubtedly, the most affected group was the informal women workers, who lost their work. Past literature has suggested that development based on Gandhian principles can build resilient communities and provide an effective solution to mitigate the negative effects of external crises (such as a pandemic) (Bhatt et al., this volume-b; Ghosh, 2007; Mishra & Shukla, this volume; Murphy, 1991). Initiatives of SEWA in reducing the COVID-19 impact were primarily driven by Gandhian principles. SEWA was mainly driven by the principle of Sarvodaya (Bhatt et al., this volume-a; Javeri et al., this volume) when it was involved in spreading awareness regarding the pandemic, providing education-based training to its workers to deal with the economic crisis, and developing various facilities for providing services to all (Ashok, 2022; Joshee, 2012). Furthermore, while providing help to address the health and economic crisis, SEWA followed the Gandhian practice of "community of care" (Mehta & Jacob, this volume) and equality (Javeri et al., this volume) and rejected discrimination in all forms.

6.1 Responses to the Health Crisis

SEWA dealt with the health crisis by organizing vaccination drives, providing medicine and counseling, and providing protective supplies (Chatterjee, 2021; WIEGO, 2022). The informal women workers were unaware of the health hazards that covid could cause. SEWA sensitized the members about covid through voice and WhatsApp messages. Several digital campaigns were also run to inform the members of covid effects. It used its healthcare providers to educate the members and teach them how to be safe by wearing masks, social distancing, and using hand sanitizers. When the government was arranging vaccination drives to curb the spread of the virus, the workers were hesitant to take the vaccine. SEWA organized campaigns in the rural and remote areas of the country to spread the message about safety and the need for vaccination. Vaccination drives were conducted in these places by SEWA. SEWA members were also engaged in producing protective masks, which led to providing employment, and they also distributed marks free of cost among other SEWA members. SEWA also took initiatives in the production of

hand sanitizers. SEWA Social Security took permission from the government to produce low-cost hand sanitizers at its ayurvedic medicine production unit.

SEWA health wing offered to convert 11 of its centers into isolation centers. They also developed their centers into specialized covid facilities to account for the shortage of beds for covid patients. The frontline healthcare workers of SEWA worked day and night to handle the patients of COVID. Its social security health unit ran two low-cost medicine shops in Ahmedabad, which were open 24/7. SEWA arranged telemedicine services for its members to help them identify the covid symptoms and provide them with medical help at the right time. To help the children of the members to be occupied and cope with the lack of going outside, SEWA, in association with PRATHAM, an education NGO, made available educational and play videos with the children of their members.

6.2 Responses to the Economic Crisis

SEWA took various measures to help its members and the informal women workers to help improve their economic condition (Chatterjee, 2022; WIEGO, 2020). SEWA helped its members to enroll in government initiatives emergency cash and free ration. They spread awareness among the informal workers regarding the government initiatives and how to avail of those. In many states across India, SEWA distributed food packets and set up community kitchens to provide cooked food to needy families. For instance, SEWA Gujarat helped rural SEWA members set up food camps along the highways near their villages to feed migrant workers walking back to their home villages, and SEWA Social Security has mobilized and supported its childcare cooperative members to cook and provide nutritious meals to the children and their families. They distributed cooked foods among the informal workers to the needy through government support and local gurudwaras. SEWA has also facilitated market linkages for its members during the lockdown. SEWA Cooperative Federation maintained the supply of vegetables from producers to buyers in Ahmedabad. It also helped the domestic house-help members to continue their salary from the employers. It started the Vegetables on Wheel scheme, thus maintaining the supply of vegetables and milk to its members. It bought agricultural products from its small and marginal farmers. Wheat was supplied to the government grain market by the farmers.

6.3 Long-Term Strategy to Counter COVID-19 Impact

The members of SEWA have been affected immensely by COVID-19 and are still recovering from its impact. In order to safeguard the members from such disasters in the future, SEWA is implementing various strategies for the digitalization of business, restoring livelihood, and strengthening the supply chain. These strategies of

SEWA are aligned with the Gandhian principle of constructive work that believes in a proactive, long-term commitment to community development (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume).

6.3.1 Digitalization

SEWA plans to develop the digital literacy of its members in the business, both in operations and payments. To broaden the reach of the micro-entrepreneur members using digital technologies, SEWA is launching its own Digital Social Enterprise—the SEWA Bazaar. Customers can buy the products from all over the country. Other modern technologies in areas like bar coding, packaging, quality control, photo-shooting, cataloging, inventory management, warehousing, etc. are being done. The members are being educated on the use of digital payment systems like digital wallets and the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) for transactions.

6.3.2 Restore Livelihood

SEWA is rebuilding the disrupted livelihood of the members by providing alternate employment and skills. Members are also being trained to use online platforms for business. It is building a platform from where the members can directly reach out to SEWA in times of challenge and disasters. It is adopting an innovative financing mechanism that aims to restore livelihood by devising (i) Livelihood Recovery Fund, (ii) Insurance products, (iii) Micro-business (rural enterprise)-based Livelihood protection plan (insurance), and (iv) a moratorium of one month on debt recovery and a waiver of interest on loans in distress hotspots and during pandemics/calamities until capability is restored.

6.3.3 Strengthen Supply Chain

Due to COVID, the supply chain was disrupted entirely. To prepare for such conditions in the future, SEWA plans to strengthen its supply chain through innovative interventions like managing storage space, creating a local circular economy, and developing a direct supply chain between women farmers and consumers. Many other organizations have also taken similar steps to build inclusive, resilient communities (Mishra & Shukla, this volume; Javeri et al., this volume; Solanki, this volume). It is currently working on the management of storage at the farm gate level that could make up for the lack of storage facilities and give the women workers control of when to sell their products. This will ensure that the supply chain is effective and efficient and can withstand any disruption in the future. It also plans to create a local circular economy for agricultural products that are packed and sold back to the rural communities, thus ensuring food security (Mishra & Shukla, this volume). It also plans to develop a direct supply chain between the women farmers

and urban customers, creating a win-win situation for both parties, where farmers get a fair price and customers get fresh products.

7 Learning from SEWA

Various centers of the SEWA faced different challenges across India. Instead of discussing each center's challenges in detail, we provide snippets of challenges faced by some cooperatives and lessons learned. To provide a comprehensive understanding, we selected cooperatives working in different domains and included both rural and urban groups. Using available secondary data, we further identified common strategies/initiatives adopted across different cooperatives in SEWA to overcome the challenges they faced. These commonalities could provide key insights to other organizations dealing with external crises. We highlight the importance of sharing information about challenges faced by different cooperatives and how they overcame them. By identifying common strategies, other organizations can learn from SEWA's experiences and apply them to their own situations. Table 1 contains information regarding the centers.

It can be observed from this table that there are some common patterns in the challenges faced by the cooperatives. They can be grouped under the following:

(i) Government policy or initiative not having desired effects: It was observed that government policies or initiatives can sometimes backfire and lead to unintended consequences. The challenges faced by SEWA's cooperatives can be linked to such government policies. Policymakers should carefully plan and implement their policies to avoid such unintended consequences. SEWA being rooted in the local context had a much better understanding of the ground situation.

(ii) Lack of financial literacy: We identify financial literacy as another significant challenge faced by people where SEWA's cooperatives were engaged in various projects. To overcome this challenge, we suggest that financial education should be promoted among marginalized and vulnerable populations.

(iii) Misuse of benefits-uncritical loan usage: We also note that government benefits, such as loans, can sometimes be misused or abused, leading to unintended consequences. To avoid this, we suggest that guidelines should be provided on how these benefits should be used to prevent misuse, such as taking on high-interest loans unnecessarily. Instead, awareness should be created to leverage local resources so that their needs are fulfilled within their means.

(iv) Fierce competition: We identify fierce competition as a significant challenge faced by SEWA's cooperatives. To overcome this challenge, we suggest that policymakers and cooperatives should identify what are the basic needs of the marginalized communities and work around the local skills and resources with the objective of Antyodaya.

Table 1 Challenge faced and lessons learned by cooperatives

Center name	Challenges faced	Lessons learned
Pasunj Mahila Dudh Utpadak Sahakari Mandli, Ahmedabad	Excessive competition Younger people often do not want to work as dairy farmers and with the upgradation of Technology, women employees have been replaced by men	Livelihood security Leadership strengthening and capacity building Changing patriarchal norms Support women employees Patience
Sangini Mahila Childcare, Ahmedabad	Maintain quality services Space Scarcity High cost of running the childcare centers, which is almost unaffordable for the parents	Select teachers who lived in the same or similar communities as the children Increase in mothers' remuneration Childcare center in a mixed community promotes social integration by bringing together children and parents from different communities
Shree Saundarya Safai Utkarsh, Ahmedabad	Cooperative has limited funds Temporary worker and quality compromise Demonetization created a temporary difficulty for the cooperative and its members	Professionalization of work The solid foundation of values to face the challenges
Swashrayee Mahila Sakh Sahakari, Indore	The challenge to promote the savings habit Considering loans as an easy way to meet the financial needs The rigidity of some officials	Financial Literacy Training program for officials
Shree Gujarat Mahila Lok Swasthya, Gujarat	Convince informal economy workers that they could be competent health workers for their communities Government program, which has started providing generic medicines at low cost	Capacity-building Solidarity building

(v) Behavioral aspects: The author notes that behavioral aspects, such as biases, emotions, and social norms, can influence an individual's decision-making process. Understanding these behavioral aspects can help policymakers and cooperatives design interventions that encourage positive behavior and discourage negative behavior among the communities served by SEWA's cooperatives.

Thus, SEWA has been successful in implementing various initiatives to address the challenges faced by its members. The initiatives include financial literacy programs, providing access to credit, skill development programs, and creating market linkages. These efforts have enabled SEWA's members, who are primarily women and marginalized communities, to improve their livelihoods and gain financial independence. The lessons learned from SEWA's initiatives can be highly beneficial to

entrepreneurs who are planning to establish or operate a venture that focuses on serving women or marginalized communities. By studying SEWA's experiences and strategies, entrepreneurs can gain valuable insights into how to effectively address the challenges faced by these groups. They can also learn about the most effective methods to promote financial literacy, provide access to credit, and develop relevant skills. Entrepreneurs can also benefit from SEWA's experience in creating market linkages. By leveraging SEWA's approach, entrepreneurs can build networks and partnerships that can help them expand their membership and various opportunities they can create for their members. Furthermore, SEWA's approach can help entrepreneurs develop innovative social entrepreneurship models that take into account the specific needs and circumstances of women and marginalized communities.

SEWA's initiatives provide valuable learning opportunities for entrepreneurs who intend to establish or operate a venture that focuses on serving women or marginalized communities. By studying SEWA's experience and strategies, entrepreneurs can gain insights into how to effectively address the challenges faced by these groups and develop innovative business models that meet their specific needs.

8 Discussion

8.1 SEWA from Gandhian Economic Perspective

Drawing from Kumarappa's analogies that describe different economic systems (Kumarappa, 1951), it can be argued that SEWA has transformed into a nurturing mother's house for distressed daughters. This connection to SEWA as a maternal abode holds significant meaning. SEWA has consistently been portrayed as a shelter, a place of refuge for its members, as depicted in Fig. 1. The members of SEWA are akin to the leaves of a tree, symbolizing their independence and self-reliance. The twigs of the banyan tree, branching out to create independent roots, demonstrate how a community is formed by sharing resources. For instance, SEWA's adherence to the tenets of the Gandhian Economy implies that the organization trusts its members to achieve end goals without the need for micromanagement. Members are expected to achieve self-reliance and self-sufficiency and face difficulties with resilience. The principle of self-reliance is emphasized to help members overcome challenging situations. Kumarappa's analogies can be used to highlight SEWA's transformation into a nurturing maternal abode for its members. The portrayal of SEWA as a shelter and the members as independent leaves of a tree signifies their self-reliance. The approach of the organization towards its members is based on trust and the principle of self-reliance, which fosters a sense of independence and resourcefulness among its members (Javeri et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Mishra & Shukla, this volume). Moreover, the principles of the Gandhian Economy guide an organization and enable its members to embody the fundamental values of *Satya*, *Ahimsa*, and *Aparigraha* (Iyengar & Bhatt, this

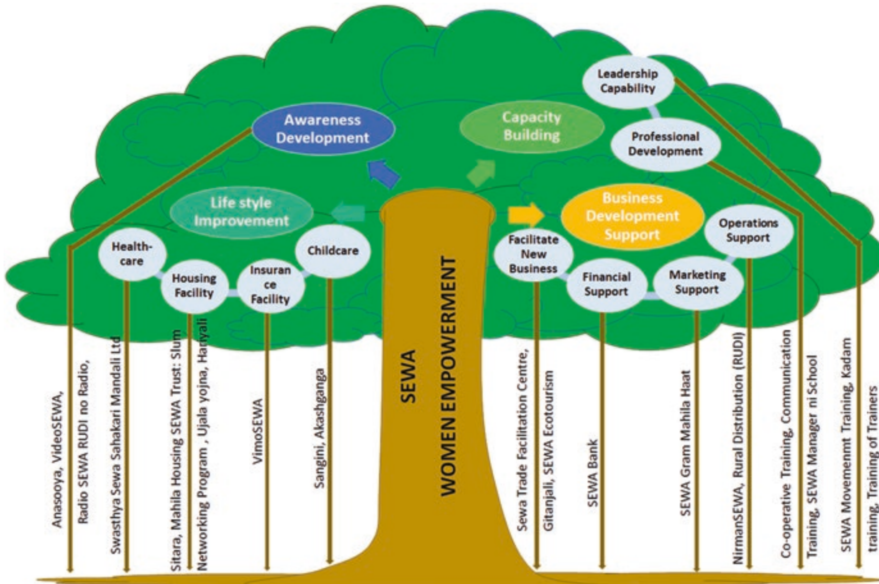

Fig. 1 Portrayal of SEWA

volume; Roy, this volume). SEWA's adherence to these principles underscores the organization's commitment to the core tenets of the Gandhian Economy. In this sense, SEWA's approach can be viewed as a true reflection of the essence of the Gandhian Economy.

SEWA follows the concept of emotive-cognitive frames for social entrepreneurs to mobilize collective action for social change (Bhatt, 2022). A social entrepreneur has two equally important sub-tasks: first, the social entrepreneur needs to understand their issue in situ from the perspective of the focal individual and community, and second, the social entrepreneur needs to frame their social change mission in a manner that connects with the individual at both the cognitive and emotional levels (Bacq & Janssen, 2011; Hota et al., 2023). SEWA did follow both of these tasks in it. Most social entrepreneurs focus on a material condition that leads to the distress of an individual and community and tries to change such material condition in resources constrained environment (Hota et al., 2019; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021).

However, often, social problems are systemic and exacerbated by social, economic, and cultural practices. In such situations, cognitive and emotional framing can play an important role. Figure 1 provides a framework for social entrepreneurs to apply the Gandhian Economic principles in practice. This framework is built upon the key learning insights from SEWA and summarizes how different activities of SEWA are leading to Sarvodaya. The framework involves three stages: (i) identifying the source of challenges, (ii) showing the path to overcome challenges, and (iii) motivational support to continue the journey. The first stage shows the broader

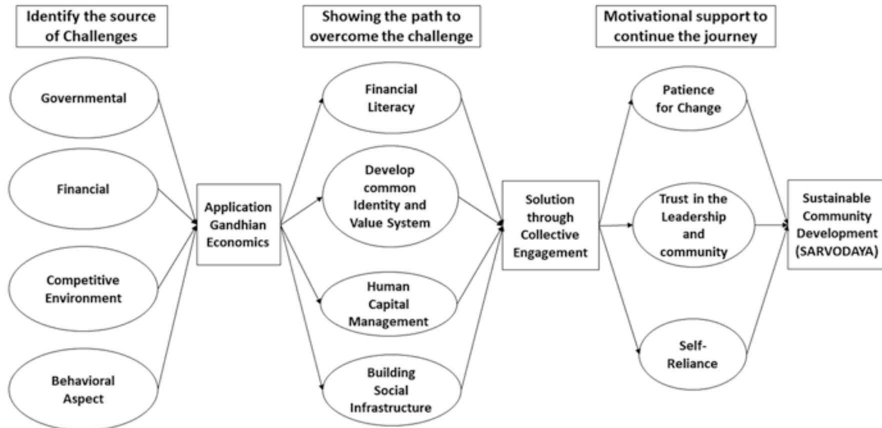

Fig. 2 The Gandhian framework for social entrepreneurs

challenges faced by SEWA workers. The second stage describes the pathways to overcome these challenges by adopting the Gandhian economy principle. Since the ultimate goal of the Gandhian economy is to achieve Sarvodaya, the last stage, highlights the role of motivational support in sustainable community development. Thus, the framework in Fig. 2 shows that trust in the leaders and founders and the entire community is integral to SEWA. A social organization with a focus on bringing change and empowerment of the community can adopt this SEWA model, which relies on Gandhian Economics.

8.2 Implications

Scholars and policymakers working in sustainability are emphasizing the importance of gender equality. For example, the UN Report 2021 highlights how achieving gender equality is important to address various other SDGs. Nevertheless, how entrepreneurial ecosystems can influence gender equality and how such women-entrepreneurship leads to community development remain under-researched, especially in the context of an emerging economy (Hechavarria et al., 2019). Furthermore, the theoretical foundations to study entrepreneurship remain rooted in Western philosophy and as such are limited in generating novel insights on the motivation, function, and impact of entrepreneurship in the emerging economy (George et al., 2023; Sutter et al., 2019). By exploring the work of SEWA through Gandhian economic principles, our study tried to bridge that gap. We demonstrate how Gandhian principles of nonviolence, nonpossession, and truth shape the value system of SEWA and enable it to achieve Sarvodya (The upliftment of all) through Antyodaya (the upliftment of the most marginalized group in the society, i.e., women) (Bhatt et al., this volume-a; Kumar et al., this volume; Javeri et al., this volume). Through the

case study of SEWA, we highlight the need for building social infrastructure (i.e., child care) and nurturing communities of care (Mehta & Jacob, this volume) to address gender inequalities and build equitable, peaceful, and sustainable communities. We encourage more research to explore entrepreneurship and gender equality using indigenous theories (Sutter et al., 2019; George et al., 2023) and mixed-method approaches (Qureshi et al., 2023).

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Balancing Equity, Ecology, and Economy Through Antyodaya Leadership: A Case Study of SELCO

Shahaab Javeri, Harish Hande, and Babita Bhatt

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015 aim to address the grand challenges of climate change and social exclusion by ensuring access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy for all, as enshrined in Goal 7. However, the current centralized economic growth model that relies heavily on the consumption of conventional energy sources, particularly fossil fuels, or other forms of nonrenewable energy, has been exacerbating the environmental crisis (Bansal et al., 2014; Qureshi et al., this volume; Qureshi et al., 2021b, c; Wang et al., 2022). For example, evidence shows the electricity sector contributes more than 40% to all the CO_2 emissions globally, and this emission is likely to increase with the increasing electricity demand (Newell et al., 2021). Furthermore, the availability of affordable, clean, and reliable electricity still remains a challenge for rural, remote areas (Hande et al., 2015; Shyu, 2012; Xie et al., 2022).

According to the SDGs Report 2022, 733 million people still live without electricity and have to resort to various unclean solutions such as kerosene lamps for daily activities. The lack of access to a regular power supply and the limited availability of clean energy solutions affect the livelihood of the poor and marginalized and poses a health risk for at least 2.4 billion people (Sachs et al., 2022). Increasingly, it is realized that achieving a sustainable, equitable future, as envisioned in SDGs, requires a fundamental shift in the current top-down, growth-driven model (Bhatt, 2017, 2022; Bhatt et al., this volume-a, 2023; Qureshi et al., 2022b, 2023) and a "better balance between economic efficiency, ecological sustainability, and social

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equity" (Amin, 2009, p. 30). In this context, social enterprises based on the Gandhian philosophy of development have the potential to offer alternative solutions (Bhatt et al., 2013; Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Ghatak et al., this volume; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume).

Social enterprises are hybrid organizations that leverage market-based models to generate social value and create income opportunities for socioeconomically excluded populations (Bhatt et al., 2019, 2022; Kistruck et al., 2013a; Qureshi et al., 2016; Hota et al., 2019, 2023). As hybrid organizations, social enterprises pursue and balance two competitive objectives: social objectives, which is focused on solving entrenched social issues in society, and commercial objective, which is focused on the financial sustainability of the organization through revenue generation (Bhatt, 2022; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018b, 2021a, 2023; Sutter et al., 2023).

The research on social entrepreneurship increased exponentially in the last decade, and scholars have used various perspectives to explore this phenomenon, including hybridity (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Bhatt, 2022; Doherty et al., 2014; Qureshi et al., 2017; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017), social intermediation (Kistruck et al., 2013a; Pillai et al., 2021b; Qureshi et al., 2021b, c), market inclusion (Bhatt et al., 2022; Pandey et al., 2021), social infomediary (Parth et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018a, 2023), digital social innovation (Qureshi et al., 2021d; Zainuddin et al., 2022), and sharing economy for the marginalized (Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a; Qiu et al., 2021). Emerging research also uses the ecosystems approach (Bhatt et al., 2021; Jha et al., 2016), institutional entrepreneurship (Qureshi et al., 2016; Tracey et al., 2011), technoficing (Qureshi et al., 2022b, this volume), inclusion works (Hota et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., 2023), commoning (Bhatt et al., 2023; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume), intersectionality (Qureshi et al., 2023), and resource mobilization (Hota et al., 2019; Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013b) to understand the management and impact of social enterprises. However, several gaps in our understanding remain.

Most significantly, even though most social enterprises either emerge or work in the Global South (Karamchandani et al., 2009; Rippin et al., 2018), the theories used for studying these social enterprises, by and large, have Western philosophical foundations (Sutter et al., 2019). Critics argue that these embedded Western-centric assumptions in entrepreneurship theory can run the risk of "transposing latent theoretical assumptions and prescriptions into new settings-a mismatch of theory at best, and a harmful intervention at worst" (George et al., 2023, p. 1). This is particularly true for social entrepreneurship (Doherty et al., 2014), which seeks innovative solutions to inequality, poverty, and climate change and requires a better understanding of social context (Bhatt, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2022; Hota et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., 2022b). Employing indigenous theories that bring new philosophical orientations to understand social enterprises can generate more novel insight.

The Gandhian perspective on development provides an alternative by challenging the false economy-ecology dichotomy and providing holistic, decentralized, and grassroots solutions to achieve SDGs. Indeed, many social entrepreneurs from India, a country described as an advanced laboratory for [social] enterprises

(Karamchandani et al., 2009, p. 11), have been inspired by the Gandhian vision of development (Bhatt et al., 2013; Bhatt, 2017).

In this chapter, we illustrate how Gandhian principles are enacted in practice through the case study of Solar Electric Lighting Company (SELCO) – a social enterprise based in Bangalore, India, and operating in multiple provinces. We first discuss the vision and mission of SELCO and demonstrate how the organization's focus on meeting the energy needs of rural and marginalized communities aligns with Gandhi's emphasis on uplifting the underprivileged and marginalized sections of society for the upliftment of all (i.e., *Sarvodaya* through *Antyoday*a). We then analyze SELCO's organizational structure and implementation process and illustrate how its proximity to the community members, holistic strategies for self-reliance, and decentralized decision-making enact Antyodaya in practice. We conclude that by keeping the most marginalized individuals and communities at the center of all decision-making and planning, SELCO exhibits the tenets of Antyodaya leadership.

1 SELCO: Origin and Operating Structure

> Our goal is to deliver 1 billion tonnes of emissions reductions by 2030. (Climate Impact Partners, n.d.)

> We, at SELCO, believe that one of the ways to achieve the goal of equity is via the path of renewable energy. And more so, the powerful linkage between poverty alleviation and decentralized renewable energy automatically provides solutions to the ever-growing problems of global warming and climate change – the brunt of which is mostly borne by the poor. (Harish Hande, co-founder of SELCO)

Solar Electric Lighting Company (SELCO) is a social enterprise that aims to bring sustainable energy like solar energy to the base-of-the-pyramid customers and create systemic change toward poverty alleviation and climate change (Hande et al., 2015). It was co-founded by Dr. Harish Hande in 1995 in Bengaluru, India. Dr. Harish Hande won the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2011, an award that is considered to be Asia's Noble Prize (Subramanian, 2015). The award recognized three very important aspects of SELCO – social enterprise, sustainable energy, and asset creators which, according to Hande, "epitomize the foundation for a world that is caring, peaceful and equitable" (Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, n.d.; see also Pai & Hiremath, 2016).

Throughout its 28 years of operation, SELCO has created 67 energy service centers in Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala; employed 552 persons; and has impacted more than one million people by providing access to sustainable and affordable energy (SELCO, n.d.-b). The company also works with individuals, small businesses, and larger organizations to bring sustainable and affordable power to their operations.

Today, SELCO functions as an energy access ecosystem. This ecosystem includes four independent yet interconnected organizations, each aiming to address the existing gaps in the current energy system.

I. SELCO INDIA: It is a for-profit social enterprise that markets, sells, and installs sustainable energy products such as home solar systems to the base of pyramid customers. It operates primarily in southern India in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh as well as in the northern state of Bihar in India.
II. SELCO Foundation: It is a not-for-profit, field-based, research, and innovation hub. It aims to create replicable, scalable, need-based, sustainable energy solutions by fostering five critical enabling conditions (i.e., finance, skills, policy, and institutional linkages). SELCO Foundation's primary geographical focus is divided into three regions of varying socioeconomic typologies and terrains – drought-prone and arid regions of Northern Karnataka, the tribal belts of Jharkhand and Odisha, and the remote hills and plains of North East India. Additionally, being an open-source organization, it carries out knowledge transfer activities across the country and in similar contexts in Africa and Asia.
III. SELCO incubation program nurture and catalyzes local, social enterprises that aim to provide sustainable energy solutions to underserved communities. SELCO Incubation's activities are co-located with that of the SELCO Foundation to ensure that developmental efforts in the regions are directly benefitted by local enterprises and populations.
IV. SELCO Energy Access FUND: It is registered as a social venture fund under SEBI and provides patient capital (either as equity or debt) to last-mile energy access enterprises.

This decentralized, bottom-up ecosystem approach allows SELCO to work with a range of stakeholders (such as end users, innovators, institutions, and governing bodies) and as indicated in the literature (Bhatt et al., 2021; Jha et al., 2016) is crucial for creating sustainable social impact.

2 Philosophical Foundation: SELCO and Gandhian Principles

The founder of SELCO, Harish Hande, has been inspired by the work of Mahatma Gandhi and co-founded SELCO to take *direct action* against poverty and foster rural development. His vision to create a caring, peaceful, and equitable world through social entrepreneurship and asset creation is aligned well with Gandhi's vision of a development model that prioritizes equity over efficiency, need over greed, and care over competition (Iyer, 1986; Vidaković, 2022).

> The idea of such a social enterprise …had much to borrow from the Gandhian philosophy of sustainability.… If India needs to move forward in a more sustainable manner, the poor need to be part of that change, and social enterprise is the way to do it. (Harish Hande)

The two Gandhian principles that provide the philosophical foundation of SELCO's work are *Antyodaya* and village self-reliance. In the next section, we explain how SELCO, while working within the contextual frameworks of twenty-first century India, has adopted and adapted these principles to create self-reliant, participatory, inclusive communities (see also, Bhatt et al., this volume-a, -b).

2.1 Sarvodaya Through Antyodaya: Energy Solution for the Most Marginalized

A key principle of Gandhian philosophy that guides the mission, structure, and implementation process of SELCO is the principle of *Sarvodaya (*i.e., the uplift or welfare of all) through *Antyodaya.* The concept of Sarvodaya was used by Gandhi to describe a just society that uplifts all and works for the welfare of each and every human being (Vettickal, 1999). In such a society, freedom from injustices and social barriers, which prevent individuals from achieving their human potential, is at the core of development activities (Sharma, 1997). Gandhi believed that the practice of Sarvodaya starts from the below, by giving priority to the welfare of the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor in the society (i.e., Antyodaya) (Gandhi, 1958a). As such, some refer to Antyodaya as the very soul of Sarvodaya (Diwakar, 1964; Vettickal, 1999).

The upliftment of all (i.e., Sarvodaya) through the upliftment of the last and the least (i.e., Antyodaya) is how SELCO defines its inclusive development objective. SELCO aims to achieve inclusive development by

> Delivering Last Mile Sustainable Energy Solutions that Improve Quality of Life and *Socio-Economic Development for the Poor.* (SELCO, n.d.-a)

Gandhi also proposed Sarvodaya through Antyodaya as an alternative approach to address the trilemma faced by development actors in balancing the competing demands of growth, equity, and ecological sustainability (Balganesh, 2013). He declared utilitarianism as a "morally vacuous" economic theory due to its exclusive focus on material happiness and economic prosperity (Aydin, 2011; Vettickal, 1999). As utilitarianism evaluates social welfare based on *the maximum happiness for the maximum number of people*, Gandhi also criticized it for overlooking distributive concerns and the relative differences in utilities among individuals. He argued that an economic model that externalizes the social and environmental cost of production will result in extreme inequalities and overconsumption of resources (Appadorai, 1969). Harish Hande echoed the similar concern raised by Gandhi during the acceptance of the Magsaysay Award, in 2011. He noted that

> These are times where material growth has taken precedence over the environment, social well-being and equity. The very foundation of society has become unsustainable. (Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, n.d.)

Instead of material progress, Gandhi envision Gram Swaraj – self-reliant village communities that are built upon mutual interdependencies, care, and fulfilling the needs of its members. He proposed the maxim of *Sarvodaya* (*welfare of all*) *through Antyodaya* (*the welfare of the most marginalized*) to conceptualize development activities in Gram-Swaraj (Martin, 2001). The principle of *Antyodaya* proposes that development activities should be designed and implemented to benefit the most marginalized. Gandhi suggested the following thought experiment whenever someone (i.e., a development actor) faces a dilemma in their individual or social action:

> Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man [woman] whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him [them]. Will he [they] gain anything by it? Will it restore him [them] to a control over his [their] own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melt away. (Source: *Mahatma Gandhi – The Last Phase*, Vol. II (1958b), p. 65)

As the progress of all is only possible through the upliftment of the most marginalized, Gandhi viewed social equity as an essential condition of a good and harmonious society (Gandhi, 1958a).

In SELCO, Antyodaya is an underlying principle guiding all organizational activities. The organization's mission statement shows a deeper commitment to the underserved, poor population and its implementation strategy also take into consideration the specific needs and interest of the most marginalized. SELCO designed solutions for the poor because

> SELCO recognized an unjust equilibrium – where the very poor are trapped in a cycle of poverty exacerbated by unreliable or unavailable energy access. (SELCO, n.d.-b)

SELCO envisions access to clean energy as an integral part of enabling the sustainable delivery of essential services such as health, education, and livelihood. It views the lack of energy access as one of the biggest challenges to poverty reduction in India. According to Hande, a lack or irregular access to energy,

> has affected the reliable income generating activities for the underserved populations of the country. India can become the leader in poverty reduction through innovations in sustainable energy. (DH News Service, 2017)

Hande gives various examples where the lack of clean, regular energy access has affected the earning potential of the marginalized. One such example is silk farmers in Karnataka. These farmers used to rely on candles or kerosene lamps for lighting to feed the silkworms in the dark since the harsh light obstructs the growth of silkworms. However, the use of kerosene lamps was risky as a drop of spilled kerosene could destroy the entire basket of worms and could also cause fire-related accidents (Subramanian, 2015). There is also an example of flower pickers who had to carry a kerosene lamp in one hand and used the other to pick flowers at night so they could deliver flowers to the market early morning. SELCO India designed a solar-powered headlamp that was worn with a band leaving both hands free. This has increased the productivity, buying power, and quality of work of these underserved populations (Subramanian, 2015).

However, Hande also notes that the interest and needs of the poor and marginalized have been often neglected by big businesses and policymakers (Hande, 1999; Hande et al., 2017). A persistent myth is that the poor cannot afford and sustain sustainable technologies (Hande et al., 2015). He argued that in a country where nearly half of all households do not have electricity, this myth has deprived poor and marginalized groups of accessing solar technology benefits (such benefits include, cost-efficiency, clean energy, improvements in the quality of life, and livelihood) (Hande et al., 2015). SELCO is founded on the belief that the current model of economic growth has mostly benefited the rich and middle class and has overlooked the interest of farmers and remote rural communities. As the purpose of commercial businesses is primarily profit-seeking or economic in nature, they rarely consider the real needs of the majority of the population or the planet as a whole. They are rather fixated on meeting their own needs and comfort, often worsening societal challenges.

As indicated above, the pressing challenges faced by street vendors, silk farmers, flower pickers, rural manufacturers, and blacksmiths are often overlooked and not given priority by privileged innovators. These individuals and communities have the potential to shorten supply chains, reduce climate impacts resulting from mass production, and contribute to rural economies. Despite the potential benefits of supporting these marginalized groups, the privileged innovators who are in positions of power tend to overlook their needs and concerns. This failure to prioritize the interests of these groups has significant implications for sustainable development and equitable economic growth. If these marginalized groups are not supported, they may continue to face economic and social exclusion, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize the importance of these communities and prioritize their needs when designing policies and programs aimed at promoting sustainable development and equitable economic growth.

Hande co-founded SELCO to challenge the myth that the poor cannot afford and sustain sustainable technologies and to show the potential that resides in socially and economically marginalized groups. Just as Gandhi believed in the dignity of marginalized groups, Hande also believes in the enormous potential of the poor and the marginalized. For example, he made the following comment about the street vendors:

> Have you ever heard of a street vendor going out of business? This is what I ask the management students of today. My point is that with the most difficult of circumstances and with limited resources, he must be doing something right to sustain himself and not run out of business. For me, the all-time classic social entrepreneur is the street vendor – he never cheats and carries on sustainable delivery. But Kingfisher Airlines, despite possessing the best brains, is in the doldrums. SELCO started the same year as Lehmann Brothers. Today, we are here and they are not. (Chawla, 2012)

While SELCO burst the myth regarding the "bankability" of the poor, another key concern in enacting Antyodaya (i.e., designing and implementing marginalized-centric solutions) is the systemic barriers faced by the poor and marginalized in exercising their agency. Mounting evidence shows how the hierarchal social structure and the discriminatory social norms prevent the most marginalized from

accumulating the assets and capabilities required to break the cycle of poverty (Qureshi et al., 2018b, 2023; Sutter et al., 2023). As such, organizations practicing Antyodaya need to pay attention to the social context and challenge the existing power structure within the communities (Bhatt et al., 2022). There is also a need to design solutions that build upon the assets and capabilities of the marginalized (Hota et al., 2023) and promote self-reliance and enhance their dignity. Gandhi developed the concept of Swaraj (self-rule) as not mere independence from external power (i.e., Britain) but also as gaining independence from everything that is oppressive in the society (Vettickal, 1999). In the following paragraph, we illustrate how SELCO applies and adapt these concepts according to contemporary times and context.

2.2 Antyodaya Through Decentralized Sustainable Energy

Gandhi was convinced that decentralization of power was the key to a just and equitable society and had a concrete agenda for implementing decentralization of power. On a political level, he suggested the village as the center of governance and political decision-making. On an economic level, he recommended small businesses based on existing resources that advance mutual interdependencies. On a social level, he suggested equality among all social groups as the necessary condition for self-reliant communities (Thakker, 2011, see also, Oak, 2022; Bhatt et al., this volume-b).

Decentralized Sustainable Energy is at the core of SELCO's approach to enacting its vision of Antyodaya. Harish Hande believes that:

> A decentralized approach in the spread of solar applications – using small-scale, standalone installations instead of large, centralized thermal stations – is best for reaching poor, remote villages where the technology is most needed. (Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, n.d.)

The decentralized approach aims to offer comprehensive and holistic solutions to development and includes three main components: a complete package of products, reliable service, and need-based financing aimed to empower its customers.

2.2.1 Complete Package of Product

SELCO designs and offers a wide variety of solar products for different consumers (SELCO, n.d.-c). Since the aim is to provide long-term sustainable solutions to poverty, SELCO design product and services that create assets for the underserved population. Such assets can provide economic and social stability for the poor thus negating the threats of potential vulnerability in the future. For example, SELCO has developed products such as Solar Home Lighting, Solar Water Heater, Roti Rolling Machine Solar Inverter Systems, and other home appliances (such as Butter

Churners, Grinders, etc.) that aim to improve the livelihood and well-being of the end users.

Furthermore, these solutions comprise appropriate hardware and infrastructural technologies, which suit the needs of marginalized end users. For example, the use of improved Solar Powered Fan Blowers and Power Hammers has increased productivity, improved efficiency, and reduced drudgery of rural blacksmiths in India. Another example that connects income-generating activities, livelihood, and energy access is the solar powered small or medium scaled rice mill. SELCO reports shows how these rice mills have helped paddy growers mill their rice cost-effectively for their own consumption and increased their earned income from the sale of processed rice.

2.2.2 Doorstep Services

To reach the last mile and sustain the reliability and durability of its programs, SELCO also provides installation and aftersales services through the energy service centers (ESCs). These ESCs ensure maintenance support and guidance from the regional branch office and headquarters and form the basic building block of SELCO's rural operations (Pai & Hiremath, 2016). In March 2023, the company had a total of 67 ESCs working in various geographies. Each ESC has a service territory in which it provides SELCO's energy services.

2.2.3 Door-Step Financing

SELCO also offers door-step financing through microloans. The purpose of these microloans is to improve the accessibility of their solutions to poor and marginalized end users. Hande observed that while the poor spend a large portion of their income to meet their energy requirements, they are unable to pay a large sum of money at one go (Pai & Hiremath, 2016).

Recognizing the financial problem of the poor, SELCO created a financial model to connect its customer to rural banks (Hande et al., 2015; Pai & Hiremath, 2016). In this model, the customer would pay 10–25% of the price upfront as a down payment, and the rest was given as a loan to be paid back over a period of 3–5 years (Pai & Hiremath, 2016). However, initially, Hande faced two issues to address customer financing. First, there were no schemes in the banks to fund solar lighting as banks financed only income-generating activities such as agriculture or trading activity (Pai & Hiremath, 2016). Second, rural customers did not have the funds to make the down payment. To address the first issue, Hande used his social networks and long experience working in the field to approve the financing for solar lighting systems by rural banks (Pai & Hiremath, 2016). Now, SELCO works closely with financial institutions like regional rural banks to help allocate existing financial products or create new ones, toward the provision of credit for the procurement of assets by end users. To address the down payment situation, he worked together with various

development agencies to provide funds to small borrowers. It helps the borrowers in accessing existing governmental welfare schemes and philanthropic money to help bridge gaps in financing. This triple decentralized strategy for reaching the poor (i.e., a strategy of *customized products*, *doorstep financing*, and *doorstep service*) helps SELCO to enact *Antyodaya* in practice.

2.3 Poor as Asset Creators and Employers

Until the poor become asset creators, we are not empowering them. (Hande)

Antyodaya is based on the principle of equal dignity. Gandhi believed in mutual respect and the essential dignity shared by every person, despite their position in the social hierarchy. He aimed at the upliftment and enrichment of human life rather than a higher standard of living with no respect for human and social values. For example, Gandhi founded his theory of Trusteeship, which provides a guideline for businesses to integrate the social value with business value (Balakrishnan et al., 2017). This theory suggests that the distribution of wealth, which is crucial for achieving Sarvodaya through Antyodaya, is not about charity but about ensuring basic human dignity.

We find these principles of equal dignity and mutual respect enacted by SELCO during the implementation of their programs in the communities. As indicated above, SELCO customized its product based on the need of the poor. In this need-based customized business model, the poor are treated as partners, innovators, and enterprise owners (Pai & Hiremath, 2016). SELCO believes that solutions should not only be designed *for* the poor but also *with* the poor. While most organizations create product and services based on their assumption of what the poor need, SELCO work closely with the community members to understand their need and circumstances.

Wants can be standardized; needs have to be customized.

As noted above, SELCO create products that address the need of poor, underserved communities. Unlike luxury products (such as cell phones, dishwashers, etc.), which can be standardized, these need-based products had to be customized (e.g., lighting services for a street vegetable vendor or headlamps for silk farmers at night) (Pai & Hiremath, 2016). To understand needs, SELCO found it crucial to embed itself into the communities and see the client as a partner and not just a customer or an end user (Pai & Hiremath, 2016; see also, Hande et al., 2017).

This culture of being rooted in the community is informed by Hande's earlier experiences as a graduate student. As Hande notes (1999), his field visit to the Dominican Republic while a graduate student in the United States was very influential in understanding the importance of a decentralized energy approach to reach the poor in remote villages where the technology is most needed. After returning to India, he decided to spend time in villages to understand their needs and circumstances firsthand. These experiences made him realize that the adoption and

diffusion of technology are not just about the nature and type of product but also about the social realities that technology seeks to change.

Therefore, SELCO places significant emphasis on promoting innovation and enterprise development at the grassroots level to ensure that its developmental investments benefit the individuals and communities it aims to mobilize. At the core of SELCO's operations lies the value of inclusivity, which enables individuals at the base of the social hierarchy to participate in decision-making processes and effectively solve local problems. According to SELCO, this approach unleashes the true potential of marginalized individuals and communities that are often overlooked in mainstream development initiatives. SELCO believes that there is significant untapped potential in India to adopt this approach on a large scale, and this can help shift away from the current status quo. By prioritizing the needs and interests of marginalized communities, SELCO promotes equitable development and economic growth that benefits the entire society. By enabling individuals and communities at the base of the pyramid to fully participate in the development process, SELCO demonstrates a commitment to creating a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Since social contexts are often unfavorable to the most marginalized (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2020, 2022a), SELCO's approach to seeing the poor as partners (instead of mere consumers) has been influential in enhancing their self-esteem and in helping them in accessing and using technology to better their lives. SELCO further expands these partnerships by creating decentralized ownership and community structures. These structures are mostly owned either by entrepreneurs from the communities it seeks to benefit, or by groups, both small and large like Self Help Groups and Farmer Producer Organizations.

To further elaborate upon how SELCO works with the small vendors as a partner, we illustrate it through the previously cited example of the rural blacksmith. SELCO first began to work on the solar-powered technology for the blacksmith when it learned about their problem from one of the SELCO's staff who came from the blacksmith community himself, in the state of Karnataka. Product designers at SELCO then worked closely with the blacksmith who explained the problem to design the new solutions. The product designer discovered a highly efficient fan being manufactured in the state and brought it to the blacksmith who attached a coupling pipe suitable to his forge which then became the final product. For this design service provision, the blacksmith was adequately compensated. This new product was then manufactured in the same state and installed along with the solar energy components by an enterprise from the region. Upon the success of this solution, it was replicated in other states like Assam. In this new state, the solar energy components were installed and serviced by a new enterprise in Assam rather than the original in Karnataka. This helps the new enterprise integrate the new product into its portfolio as well. If demand for this product showcases an increase in Assam, manufacturing of fans and the blower itself can be promoted in Assam. This example illustrates that replication of successful models, products, and services doesn't have to result in the scaling up of a particular enterprise but rather the scaling of processes and transfer of knowledge that can create equitable growth opportunities

in different states of India. This example also illustrates the unique hiring practices of SELCO and their enactment in Antyodaya.

2.4 Human Resource Management/Hiring Practices: Antyodaya Through Trusteeship

Gandhi believed that true economics stands for "social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest, and is indispensable for a decent life" (Rana & Majmudar, 2014). Gandhi proposed trusteeship as a moral instrument and a pragmatic tool to achieve Antyodaya. In trusteeship theory, businesses act as trustees to their stakeholders and use their wealth and resources to enhance common interests in society. Trusteeship also explains the reciprocal obligation of business stakeholders. In SELCO, a commitment to trusteeship is seen in its hiring, wage, and compensation policies.

2.4.1 Hiring Practices

SELCO's organizational structure as a for-profit social enterprise shows a commitment toward its most marginalized stakeholders, rather than its shareholders. SELCO has a unique way to hire its employees. At present, almost 90% of SELCO's 552 employees are from the local areas they serve (SELCO, n.d.-b). This reinforces mutual trust, empathy, and sensitivity between the client base and SELCO. The selection criteria for new staff at SELCO India focuses less on academic education (basic education or vocational training is accepted) and more on their desire to help local communities and develop their home geographies. This staffing protocol diverges significantly from those adopted by the mainstream developmental organization, or enterprises looking to serve the rural poor, or companies at large. Many of these organizations seek to hire highly qualified individuals, seen from a conventional lens of educational degrees from India's top institutions. However, such hiring might not benefit the end-users, and the client base might not see any economic gain from the company's business. Conversely, hiring staff with top institutions (without an in-depth induction) might also create a lot of pressure on such companies to increase their revenues to meet the high overhead costs brought by the choice of staff they hire. Not hiring from the client base also creates a sense of top-down client interaction in the sales process, which SELCO finds counterintuitive to its values of building trust and relationships with its clients. As Hande asserts:

> [T] he country, which is plagued by caste system has created another "caste system" in the name of English and degrees. "There is entrepreneurship and innovations among those who have no knowledge of English and degrees as well. This needs to be tapped for the development of the country". (DH News Service, 2017)

SELCO also provides professional development possibilities to its staff. As previously described, SELCO India's staff has a limited education background in the conventional sense; however, this factor doesn't impede the growth trajectories of its employees. The staff has two options for upward mobility: one is the managerial trajectory, where one can progress to leading a branch of SELCO India, a region, or the enterprise, and the other is a specialist growth trajectory catering to the technical staff engaged. An excellent example of the former is the current CEO of SELCO India, Mr. Mohan Hegde, who started as an Office Administrator in a branch of SELCO India. Despite many individuals within the 552 staff members of SELCO India that conventionally might be more qualified, the growth trajectory of Mohan Hegde and many others like him show SELCO's reciprocal obligation to its employee's well-being.

2.4.2 Wage and Compensation

The shareholder model has created a reward structure in which those at the top of the organizational hierarchy receive lavish bonuses and salaries and have a lot of bargaining power (Kavanagh & Veldman, 2020). However, those at the base of that hierarchies often end with tenuous, temporary jobs and near-poverty wages. In SELCO, we see an Antyodaya-driven compensation model. As noted by Hande,

> In SELCO, 20% of the profit is kept aside for the employees and the way it is designed is that the person at the bottom of the hierarchy, the person who earns the least, gets the first hits at the profit.

Employees have the right to decide where these profits should be allocated, and in the past, an education fund and disaster relief fund were created based on their preferences. These policies and practices of SELCO show a long-term orientation and reciprocal instead of transactional obligations. Hande believes that Gandhi's vision of harmonious relations among business stakeholders could be achieved through these hiring and compensation policies. Such policies are an example of Gandhi's concept of reciprocal obligations as "each person's own interest is safeguarded by safeguarding the interest of the other" (Gandhi, 1938).

2.5 Conclusion: Insights on Antyodaya Leadership

The concept of *Antyodaya* leadership, which we define as structuring organizational activities to benefit the most marginalized individuals in society, is a fundamental aspect of SELCO's management approach. Through its mission, vision, and processes, SELCO's leadership team demonstrates a commitment to *Antyodaya* leadership principles. SELCO's operational structure is designed with the most marginalized at the core of their activities. They provide a complete package of products, reliable doorstep services, and need-based financing, ensuring that

marginalized individuals have access to essential services. Furthermore, SELCO views poor and marginalized individuals as asset creators and employers, demonstrating their belief in the potential of these individuals to transform their communities.

In keeping with their commitment to *Antyodaya* leadership, SELCO's hiring practices prioritize employing individuals from the local rural communities where they conduct their business. This approach ensures that those who are most familiar with the needs of the community are empowered to drive change from within. SELCO's wage and compensation practices are equitable and mostly nonhierarchical, further emphasizing their commitment to *Antyodaya* leadership. Promotion policies within the company allow anyone to rise from the lowest rank to top executive positions, demonstrating that SELCO values and nurtures talent at all levels. Perhaps, most importantly, SELCO's leadership team demonstrates genuine care for the most marginalized individuals and is committed to empowering them. As such, it shows how organizations could move away from the "rationalistic and utilitarian stance" to address structural inequalities (Bhatt, 2022) and instead prioritize the needs and capabilities of marginalized communities, to drive meaningful change and promote social justice. In this way, SELCO's management team exemplifies *Antyodaya* leadership and serves as a model for other organizations seeking to create positive change in the world.

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Economics: Where People Matter

Aruna Roy

1 Introduction

1.1 COVID: The Leveler

COVID-19 stripped the world of some illusions, and the pandemic was a leveler (Dennison, 2021; Deshpande & Ramachandran, 2020). In India, the threat to the life of people of all castes, classes, and other divides exposed the vulnerability of life and its fragility (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Johri et al., 2021; Kim & Subramanian, 2020). It began dramatically for the workers, with the closure of all workplaces. Small and large industries and factories were ordered by government diktat to close down, with a four-hour notice. As the shutters came down quickly, migrant workers across India were stranded, branded, and unable to move or survive (Iyengar & Jain, 2021; Jesline et al., 2021). As millions walked and struggled to reach their homes, empowered and privileged India was forced to acknowledge the existence of their fellow citizens. It was a brief period when the reality of India's underbelly—of living on the margins, often crowded out by glitz and power debates—grabbed the attention of the privileged and the media (Misra, 2022).

Sensitized by its own predicament of facing the fragility of survival, the shortage of oxygen cylinders, and hospital beds, an indifferent affluent society was forced to look at the condition of the less privileged. The struggle to survive strengthened arguments for the need for robust public health and employment systems (Bussolo et al., 2021; Kuppalli et al., 2021; Walter, 2020). There emerged an obvious counterargument to the myth that public health, employment, and rations, among other things of necessity, were sops and subsidies for the poor. The privileged, threatened

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by the transmission of the disease, isolated themselves. For the poor, living in one room or shack, isolation was an impossibility. The condition propelled the range of civil society actors to plan and organize support (Bhargava, 2021; Tandon & Aravind, 2021). As we wrote for the Seminar journal (Roy & Dey, 2020),

> *Migrant worker* is a phrase that is pejorative. It is a stigma… The mass walks back home following the lockdown is not a migration. It is a forced relocation of individuals to go back to places of comparative comfort and familiarity. It is, in fact, a distress-based internal displacement of millions of Indian citizens.
>
> Actually, till the migrants - by sheer presence, numbers, and visible distress as they walked home – compelled an acknowledgment, they were unseen and unheard by design. When no workers were seen on the streets, it was assumed that the crisis was over.
>
> Policymakers, either had no clue about the condition of 93% of India's workforce, or studiously suppressed data and information[1] in a bid to paint an ever 'India Shining'. It is shocking that in contemporary times where computerization and big data have become the norm, we are unable to get statistics of workers classified as 'migrant labour' in states or big cities. Even the numbers who stayed back, or live permanently in the *bastis,*[2] are not known.

This quote reminds us that uneven economic growth cannot help this planet prosper in the immediate or long run. It is worth looking at the recent OXFAM Inequality Report (Ahmed et al., 2022), which highlights the deep economic inequality during the COVID years. There must be a limit to the expansion of private capital, and there must be re-distribution. In such a scenario, Gandhi assumes the greatest significance.

The report titled, *Inequality Kills - The unparalleled action needed to combat unprecedented inequality in the wake of COVID-19*, states,

> The wealth of the world's 10 richest men has doubled since the pandemic began. The incomes of 99% of humanity are worse off because of COVID-19. Widening economic, gender, and racial inequalities[3]—as well as the inequality that exists between countries—are tearing our world apart. This is not by chance, but choice: 'economic violence' is perpetrated when structural policy choices are made for the richest and most powerful people. This causes direct harm to us all, and to the poorest people, women and girls, and racialized groups most. Inequality contributes to the death of at least one person every four seconds. But we can radically redesign our economies to be centered on equality. We can claw back extreme wealth through progressive taxation; invest in powerful, proven inequality-busting public measures; and boldly shift power in the economy and society. If we are courageous, and listen to the movements demanding change, we can create an economy in which nobody lives in poverty, nor with unimaginable billionaire wealth — in which inequality no longer kills.

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[1] These tendencies of suppressing information or creating disinformation and misinformation has increased with the advent of social media, such as Twitter (Qureshi et al., 2020, 2022a).

[2] *Basti* refers to (in India) a slum inhabited by poor people.

[3] An area of research that is gaining importance in management and organization studies research (Bapuji, 2015; Bhatt et al., 2023; Gorbatai et al., 2021; Maurer & Qureshi, 2021; Qureshi et al., 2018b; Riaz, 2015).

1.2 The Gandhian Context of Public Action

My generation of Indians, born before or around the year of Indian Independence in 1947, consider Gandhi to be a significant figure in both their personal and political experiences. Further, he also served as an inspiration in our pursuit to locate ourselves in political struggles outside the mainstream electoral system. He remained a moral benchmark for those who worked with the marginalized in rural India (Garg, 2019; Ghatak et al., this volume; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume; Javeri et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Patwardhan & Tasciotti, 2022; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Qureshi et al., this volume; Vij, 2013). No rural worker, then or now, can function without recognizing and addressing privilege, unipolar theories of development, and the displacement of rural production methods by technology (Rotz et al., 2019). What is now known popularly as "Gandhian Economics" was further developed by Schumacher in his book on sustainable economics, "Small is Beautiful?" Gandhi also left us the legacy of independent political action as a model for accessing justice (Chandhoke, 2008). His definition of categories of community work—as *Seva, Nirman, and Sangharsh*, that is, service, creative work or development, and struggle—has been useful in locating public action (cf. Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a, b).

In the period of the recent pandemic, all public action was Seva. The service for the ill, working out spaces for isolation, and accessing treatment and aftercare was a predominant concern. Civil society groups became grassroots points of contact and delivery (Bhargava, 2021; Tandon & Aravind, 2021). Braving personal consequences of infection, tens of thousands of young civil society workers delivered kits for prevention and food for those out of access to employment. In some cases, even "work" was delivered at home to increase minor cash flow. Many campuses opened up to become "COVID centers," an essential part of COVID care in both villages and cities.

As the immediate threats of infection receded, larger questions of an uneven economy and the continuing threat to employment and subsistence have remained to be addressed.

1.3 Social Entrepreneurship and Gandhi

This book is about Gandhian perspectives on "social entrepreneurship" in a post-COVID world. It would be useful first to consider what indeed the definition connotes and what Gandhi's perspective on entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship might have been. He stood for equality and was not in support of the accumulation of wealth (Rao, 1986). He would certainly have been uncomfortable with the idea of a business entrepreneur whose primary motive is personal profit. However, if one were to be generous to entrepreneurs and see them as innovators—and not the more modern understanding of them as "disrupters" or "social entrepreneurs"—they

could then be seen as "*social innovators*" (Bhatt et al., 2013, 2019, 2021, 2022; Pandey et al., 2021; Parth et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c, d; Smith & Woodworth, 2012; Zainuddin et al., 2022). For the purpose of this chapter, "social entrepreneurs" will be taken to mean those developing alternative solutions to social problems (cf. Bhatt, 2017, 2022; Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2019, 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020 a, b, 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qiu et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2016; Sutter et al., 2023), divorced from the idea of profit-making. In this chapter, civil society and social activism will be the chosen words for self-descriptions, and they will operate not within the "market economy," but rather within the Indian constitutional frame of "equality, fraternity, justice" and the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) in the Constitution. The DPSP, which shares its values with Gandhian concepts of self-reliance and dignity, is an instruction to governments to work toward greater socioeconomic equality (Hota et al., this volume; Rao, 1949).

2 Civil Society: A Space for Developing Alternatives

The quest for solutions and survival have also been concerns of many who have taken the option away from conventional careers to follow a path of collective, participatory planning and action.[4] This chapter reviews the Gandhian perspective of using and respecting human capital for development, dignity, equity, and in harmony with nature (sustainability); issues of paramount importance to a world threatened by climate change and a rapidly degrading environment (Bansal et al., 2014; Kumar, 2020; Tiwari, 2019).

We briefly look at two examples of Gandhian practice within the categories of *Nirman* and *Sangharsh*. The first looks at the development, bottom-up, acknowledging the dignity of traditional knowledge and education, the creativity and skill of the people working with one's hands. Gandhi defined participation as the basis of lasting solutions. People have the capacity to address their collective problems and evolve workable solutions to their conditions of economic distress. People, often described as "beneficiaries" and "targets," know best how to resolve issues, working within their complex socioeconomic intersectionality, interdependence, and constraints. The *second* is *Sangharsh*: struggle—which deals with the Gandhian concept of *satyagraha*,[5] nonviolence, and civil disobedience for justice. This deals with tools and modes sharpened by the national movement for independence, now used

[4] (Aruna Roy's) journey from a career in the civil services, (1968–1975) quitting it for community work (SWRC Barefoot College. Tilonia) in 1975 and later for political activism in 1987, through her work from a small village in central Rajasthan co-founding the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), which translates roughly to "Organization for the Empowerment of Workers and Peasants," has been in part a Gandhian journey from *Seva*, to *Nirman* to *Sangharsh.*

[5] Satyagraha means clinging to truth, holding fast to truth, insistence on truth, or firm adherence to truth; come what may. Gandhiji described Satyagraha as "firmness in a good cause" in Indian

to claim rights enshrined in the constitution in the form of pro-poor policy, legislation, and legal tools, for greater equality and equity. These demands ended with rights-based legislation enacted between 2005 and 2014, the Right to Information Act 2005, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Programme (MGNREGA), the NFSA (National Food Security Act), and many others. It was in fact the culmination of some of the intent of the DPSP into the enactment of legal entitlements.

2.1 Nirman: A Concept in Practice—The Tilonia Way

An alumna looks back[6]

> Our class 10 Hindi textbook had a chapter authored by the eminent Hindi writer and playwright, Bhisham Sahni. In the essay, he wrote about his journey to Tilonia in the (Ajmer) district, a model village which Bunker Roy[7] helped in developing. Sahni saw water conservation initiatives in the drought-prone village, young girls getting computer education and old(er) women working as engineers to repair solar devices. Surprised by such levels of awareness and development at the centre of India's hinterlands, he called his visit, a 'pilgrimage'. Tilonia is still hailed as the most successful experiment of rural development and self-reliance in India (Rawal, 2017).

Pragmatic economic and technical constraints and possibilities have to be located within structures that marginalized groups may know intellectually but often fail to recognize its fine-tuned manifestations of hierarchy and exclusion (Bhatt, 2022; Bhatt et al., 2022; Qureshi et al., 2017, 2018b, 2021a, 2023, this volume; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017; Sutter et al., 2023). Barefoot College at Tilonia functions with the objective of the popular Gandhian quote of reaching "the last person" (Jain, 1988). The last person is seen not merely as a recipient of goods and services but as involved in decision-making. It is strengthened by the modern democratic constitutional principle of participatory democracy. It is a space that acknowledges the equality of knowledge systems as local knowledge and expertise sits shoulder to shoulder with the "professionally" qualified.

For the purposes of this chapter, we choose to look at two specific Barefoot College, Tilonia's activities, gleaned from a range of its work—with water, health, education, women, technology et al. The *first*, Tilonia Bazaar (Hatheli), looks at crafts and livelihood, and the *second*, Solar Mamas, addresses the use of technology from a people's perspective—the well-known "Women Barefoot Solar Engineers." The work with livelihood and crafts in the Tilonia Bazaar is based on Gandhian precepts. The organization recognizes and salutes the extraordinary intelligence of

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opinion. In Young India, he pointed out that Satyagraha was just a new name for "the law of self-suffering."

[6] Aruna Roy worked with the SWRC Barefoot College Tilonia from 1975 to 1983, to unlearn and relearn-village socio-political realities.

[7] Founder, Director SWRC, Barefoot College Tilonia.

people who fashioned the wheel, designed weaving, tilled the soil, and dealt gently with nature and means of production. These systems that do not "exploit" the environment are steadily undervalued (Martin et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2022). Literacy is a skill, while education is an intelligent state of mind. Bunker Roy often introduced himself with, "I am literate but uneducated." He quotes Alvin Toffler,[8] "the illiterate of the twenty-first century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

2.1.1 Crafts as a Livelihood: The Tilonia Bazaar

> I have the conviction within me that, when all these achievements of the machine age will have disappeared, these our handicrafts will remain; when all exploitation will have ceased, service and honest labor will remain. It is because this faith sustains me that I am going on with my work…. Indomitable faith in their work sustained men like Stephenson and Columbus. Faith in my work sustains me.[9]

In the midst of the epidemic, around 80% of the artisans had to face a contraction of their markets. Their orders were either canceled, kept on hold, or both. Unexpected shutdowns halted production in the middle, resulting in wasted dyes and other materials (AIACA, 2020).

Khadi to Handicrafts to Defining Livelihood for Craftsperson

Gandhi's concept of spinning and khadi was a powerful one. It was a brilliant combination of expressing political concerns of self-reliance with economic independence (Carver, 1952; Kumarappa, 1951). It was also a statement of the importance of promoting and sustaining rural economies. Gandhi's ability to make these fusions was simple and made them connect with people immediately.

In 1975, the decline in employment opportunities in rural Rajasthan compelled a large portion of the rural population to migrate to the urban as laborers, primarily in the construction sector. While largely an agrarian region, the hinterland of Barefoot College, Tilonia, in the Ajmer District is home to a number of artisans engaged in a variety of crafts. However, due to a flagging local market, these skills were dwindling rapidly. Thus, in 1975, the College began promoting rural handicrafts in an effort to prevent the craft from dying and for the survival of craftspeople. It was difficult for Craftspersons (*dastakar*), who mainly belong to Dalit and minority communities, to address their social as well as economic problems. Working with them was a priority for Tilonia.

Identifying traditional leather workers, weavers, and handicrafts began a long journey. While leather and weaving involved upgrading and diversifying existing

[8] Alvin Toffler was an American writer and known for his work on digital technologies and its impact on cultures.

[9] Gandhi in the Harijan on November 30, 1935.

skills, handicrafts involved training women's groups in different skills. Traditional craftspersons were freed from bondage (lending by traditional money lenders) and breaking traditions using institutional finance. While weaving lost its caste taboos with the entrance of the handloom, new market relationships involved experimenting with newer technology and design.

Importantly, the work also began with looking at the plight of rural women—construction workers who migrated with their spouses to cities and as a consequence lost their health and capacity to do the work required of them rapidly. Their condition provoked the Tilonia group to address problems of migration and the need for alternative employment. They began work to sustain their livelihood, contesting conventional development/political concepts. Tilonia's design of crafts with women has laid out a system that is now widely used by nonprofits in Rajasthan and elsewhere including the strengthening of self-help groups (SHGs) created by governments to support livelihood.

The initial battle to accept crafts as livelihood and not as a commercial enterprise owes much to the original group in Tilonia. They also worked with leather and handicrafts. Eventually, "*Tilonia Bazaar*," the name it is popularly known as, and "*Hatheli*," its registered entity, have been pioneers in looking at the economic sustainability of Dalit artisans and women in a manner in which they could stay at home and improve social conditions of themselves and their families. The stability of being home dramatically impacted the educational and health standards of the family. It also helped them look for markets in a dwindling space.

Barefoot College Tilonia's motto is to empower the local people through sustainable means. As its founder Bunker Roy notes, "strengthen the rural areas and you will find fewer less people migrating to urban areas. You give them the opportunity, self-respect and self-confidence, they will never go to an urban slum" (From the webpage barefootcollegetilonia.org).

Hatheli's understanding was based on crafts as the relationship between the crafts persons' hands and the ability to produce utilitarian beauty products. Gandhiji's ideas were based on crafts that were part of the daily life of the rural economy, though much of that battle has been lost, and institutions like Hatheli and *Dastakar* have tried and for the most part succeeded in expanding the market. But it is still a battle.[10] Hatheli and Tilonia Bazaar are well recognized over the years and have kept the idea of handicrafts alive and self-sustaining.

The failure of the market mechanisms to support livelihood and the disappearance of patronage of the state has been to some extent filled by nonprofits and NGOs (Beaton & Dowin Kennedy, 2021; Kistruck et al., 2013a, b; Stephen, 2019; Will & Pies, 2017). They are however caught in the design of commercial ventures and business models (Kistruck et al., 2008), which look only at financial success, branding, and sales—all processes that are inaccessible to craftspersons, if non-profits do not support them.

[10] Excerpt from Roy and Khan (2022) where it talks about government's policies for handicraft sector. Also, Nosheen Khan, the co-author currently works as a consultant for the Tilonia Bazaar and has a Master's degree from the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) at Jodhpur.

The young in artisan families now look at blue-collar jobs as the solution to endemic poverty. Also, due to the unfavorable living conditions associated with the trade, the more experienced artisans do not want their children to remain in the profession. As a result, many of the traditional crafts that make up our history are on the verge of collapse.

The issue of rural employment, other than agriculture, has preoccupied economists and planners over the years. Artisans were not only craftspeople. They were also active contributors to development. According to the Union Ministry of Textiles, the handicrafts sector in India employs nearly seven million people, making it the third biggest employment category for the poor. Financial institutions classify crafts as a business; the small entrepreneur equipped with degrees and skills has brought in the concept of "branding." This perspective of crafts as business has brought them under the ambit of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The rural craft economy has been affected severely by both the unexpected demonetization (Lahiri, 2020) and the GST, which has caused production costs to rise significantly. The business operates on the fundamental principles of profit and competition bringing in many variables of inequality. Whereas Gandhian means of production recognize the intersectionality, interdependence, and equality in the contribution of skills for a better life (Koshal & Koshal, 1973; Rivett, 1959).

Crafts have lost the privilege of no taxation, which they enjoyed since Independence. Millions of Indian craftspeople have slim incomes and are non-income tax payees. With the introduction of GST, this already fragile, fragmented sector is now beset with other problems. They are incapable of filing these complicated tax forms (Mastani, 2017). As an additional step in this new process, they have to also locate and use an E-Mitra (common service center). Middlemen, who often filled in the critical link in the sales conduit from village to town, cheated the producers by undercutting prices. It is also essential to note that both raw materials and finished goods are subject to the new taxation regime. Consequently, artisans pay taxes in two locations. This is a double tax on those who are already struggling with rising inflation and dwindling incomes.

For those keen on greening production, crafts play an important role. The crafts industry is among the most eco-friendly and sustainable sectors of the economy using almost no fossil fuels. Artisans' infrastructure is minimal, and they are self-employed and self-sufficient but manage to support themselves despite their shrinking options. The State's policies are inconsistent with their public commitments.

There is an immediate need for an improved craft participatory policy to allow crafts to survive, and people have to learn to process digitalization (Gulati & Mathur, 2017). Government should offer to support with advertising and selling of crafts. The processes must be simple without complicated terms and conditions through special portals. Those of us who admire the beauty and aesthetics evolved of our collective heritage have to promote and use the handmade, nonstandardized product as an object of beauty and utility. In using the product, we contribute however remotely to sustain the world's vulnerable—the craftsperson and the environment.

2.1.2 The International Solar Mamas

> Machinery has its place; it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labor.[11]

The concept of "Barefoot College Tilonia," in its earlier avatar as the Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC), stated its objective in the symbol of a farmer and a specialist joining hands for development. The equality of knowledge and experience of two connected systems defined their work from the beginning. The idea that rural India has to be "taught" and "skilled" to follow a paradigm of development had to be debunked.

"Learning by doing" was a guiding principle derived from Gandhi and supported by hands-on work and the practical experience of the exchange of knowledge (Qureshi et al., 2018b, 2022b). The advantage of "doing" lies in testing ideas as you go along.

The first use of the term "barefoot" began with defining health workers, later midwives, and then with rural hand-pump *mistries* (technicians). Bunker Roy was once asked how a hand pump could be repaired by an illiterate, rural person. He countered that argument with, "when you can open up the bonnet of your expensive car for repairs to a mechanic on the highway, with no schooling and no technical degree, why are you so worried about a hand pump being repaired by a village youth who has basic literacy?" The transfer of the idea from the health worker to the solar mamas was an organic evolution of a concept in practice. When this evolved into the sophisticated use of semiliterate and illiterate local skills and intelligence to understand the complicated fabrication of the solar "printed circuit boards" (PCBs), the response was one of disbelief and astonishment.

Women from all over the world, including Africa, Asia, America, the Middle East, and even Oceania, come to Tilonia, Rajasthan, to attend Barefoot College's Solar Mamas program. Many of these women are middle-aged, and many of whom are grandmothers are considered either illiterate or semiliterate. They come from resource-constrained regions with no electricity to attend this six-month-long residential program. The mamas spoke English, Swahili, Jola, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Bengali, and many dialects, and of course, Hindi and Rajasthani were the language of the master trainers. The communication of complicated technology among them was a big challenge, given low literacy rates. Capacity building includes the installation and repair of solar lanterns, solar home lighting systems, charge controllers, and even the establishment of a rural electronic workshop. Candidates from all around the world learn to recognize electronic components using color codes and shapes. Fabrication, guided by examples in the field, and hands-on experience equip them with the technical expertise they need to bring electricity to their communities. Yet there was communication, not only of technology but of matters beyond that—exchanging information about their various cultures and songs, cooking habits, etc. (cf. Qureshi et al., 2018a, 2023).

[11] Gandhi's statement in the Young India, January 5, 1925.

Solar is generally viewed as an alternative to conventional energy and most planning stops with the change from one to the other. There are many lessons to be drawn from the solar mamas. Primary among them is the emphasis once again that intelligence is not to be confined to literacy, though the written word is not discouraged. The bogey of "technology" often seen as requiring special skills is within easy access of an intelligent non-literate woman, strengthening gender equality. A woman who gets qualified as a solar engineer contributes to sustainability in two ways. She is greening the environment but equally important she stays to work in her village and does not get seduced into migration for better jobs and salaries.

The residential training of the solar mamas for six months was a test of endurance, for a woman could leave home for that period, without antagonizing her family, traveling miles away. The fact that not only Indian women but women from around the world traveled these miles—sometimes leaving their villages for the first time in their lives—spoke volumes for the power of the program and its addressing basic needs. While remaining Gandhian, this program has made the best use of technology for, by, and with people. A total of 1708 rural women from 96 countries have been trained (The Barefoot College, this volume).

The Solar Mama is the woman who takes "light" to her people; she is empowered and takes progress, through the technology she has learned, to support the activities of the people in her village. The solar lantern and light at night help economic and social activities. Solar energy is also self-reliant and independent from power grids. The solar mama takes it further. She goes back home, empowered by her dignity, her status, and her ability to cope with change. Returning to her country after completing the training, an Afghani Solar Mama told the people in her village, "I'm not merely a woman, I am an engineer!"

2.2 *Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) and Sangharsh: Struggle as Public Action*

2.2.1 Employment as a Social Responsibility

> My opposition to machinery is much misunderstood. I am not opposed to machinery as such. I am opposed to machinery which displaces labour[12]

Section 22 of the MGNREGA, 2005[13] states, "as far as practicable, works executed by the program implementation agencies shall be performed by using manual labor and no labor displacing machines shall be used."

[12] Gandhi's statement in the Harijan on September 15, 1946.

[13] This Act mandated to provide 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to a rural household, conditionally.

While the MKSS was campaigning for the MGNREGA, a program for the right to work to be enacted by the government, there was a debate with and among some "Gandhian" groups about whether the emerging MGNREGA would counter the Gandhian principles of self-reliant villages (Pandey, 2008). Did this not make people dependent on state support giving birth to another set of dependencies? The MGNREGA drew upon article 39 of the Indian constitution, the DPSP, of providing full employment. Neither the MKSS nor various campaign groups identified the MGNREGA with any particular strain or ideology. The demand was defined by the people. However, the Gandhian principle of dignity of work and the fact that most of them lived with people in rural India and workers in particular were reflected in the formulation of the law. In addition, the fast-growing dismissive attitude of the urban elite regarding manual work had to be countered. Unfortunately, even MGNREGA terms work as "unskilled," which it is not.

The sheer number of people, the logic of the demand, and the economics of constructive labor won the day when the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) unanimously voted the law in. However, the MGNREGA is full of provisions drawn from a Gandhian approach to work, employment, rural development, and the dignity of labor.

Almost all of rural India is skilled, in using their hands and tools, to make houses, grow food, and have contributed to the development. In the official category, the skill is defined as "unskilled." The debate that follows among those from urban India, who take time to work with digging tools and unpack their experience, is perhaps worth summarizing. Every trainee and intern in the MKSS works on an MGNREGA site for 4 hours. They swear that this is skilled labor after they come back exhausted and aching all over. Their work output measured for payment according to piece rate norms is so small that it shocks them. As their well-fed bodies struggle to meet the work requirements, they see fragile women and men do it with ease and grace. They go back saying, "this is a skill." One young woman from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, sat with the village women to say, "I will teach you the computer, it's so much easier than this work!"

Everyone in a village household, no matter what the occupation, is skilled in wielding instruments of earthwork, the *genthi, phawda and the tagari*[14] necessary for agricultural production, building, and construction, for keeping the economy alive. It is a skill that now fights with mechanization and competition for work and wages. The machine, the one who owns it, and the economy they represent are formidable opponents fueled by multinational structures and global financial interests.

> Last weekend, a friend and I visited Devdungri village in Rajasthan. It lies in the Rajsamand District and is the *karmabhoomi* of the political and social activist Aruna Roy, who along with Nikhil Dey and Shankar Singh helped establish …Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS). The organisation was at the forefront of the Right to Information (RTI) campaign and also played a key role in advocating the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

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[14] Pickaxe, shovel and the receptacle to collect and carry the earth

> Both of these legislations have radically redefined the relationship between the state and its citizens by empowering the latter. They have ushered a new era in democratic India. My experiences in this remote village were extremely enlightening and calling my visit a 'pilgrimage', on the lines of Sahni,[15] wouldn't be an exaggeration.
>
> There is a small kitchen-cum-dining room where food is cooked on a traditional *chulah*…Everyone eats the food together, without any discrimination on the basis of caste, class or gender. After the meals, one washes their own utensils. All this generates a strong feeling of community and self-dependence…Both the rooms are *kuchha* structures with walls made of mud and cow-dung. But the ideas of dignity, empowerment and accountability discussed within those walls makes them taller than any ivory tower (Rawal, 2017).

The background: From the early 1970s, every visit to a village began and ended with a demand for work. Contrary to myths that circulate about the poor looking for doles, they are most conscious of their dignity. Even during the worst drought, young children would drop into the MKSS's home and office—a mud hut in the village of Devdungri—and respond with, "we have just eaten," when offered food. The local grapevine looks at the lifestyle of the MKSS and thinks "its Gandhian," but when the struggle begins, they say "they are socialists." The MKSS whether Gandhian in its methods or socialist in its demands from the state, works with and for people.

People's imagination works outside the artificial, if sometimes necessary, structures that divide the economic and social from the political paradigms the literate construct and which trigger public policy. The thought—Gandhi's perception of the dignity of people working with one's hands—is a basic economic recognition of labor as capital. The intrinsic connection between labor and their knowledge of the economics of survival led the MKSS to examine what national policy could learn from rural demands and practical knowledge. There is equality of rural and urban systems of knowledge: as the concept of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is amply displayed as policy and in its practice. Derived from the experience with the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Act,[16] it went far beyond in scope and guarantee.

The part of India where the MKSS works is the dry, desert state of Rajasthan, which faced droughts every few years even before climate change (Bokil, 2000). This caused immense economic distress in rural India, and people constantly looked for work as a means to buy food to eat and survive. The Government of Rajasthan would organize drought relief work to alleviate this distress. However, the time and frequency and number of days were not defined, leaving people at the mercy of erratic state decisions and local administrative whims. The MGNREGA drew its inspiration from the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme, which ultimately led to the legal right to employment under MGNREGA. A 100 days job entitlement programme at minimal wages, sometimes even less than the minimum wage is

[15] Eminent Hindi writer and playwright, Bhisham Sahni

[16] An Act passed in 1977 to secure the right to work by guaranteeing employment to all adults who volunteer to perform unskilled manual work in rural areas of the Indian state of Maharashtra.

provided. For example, in the state of Rajasthan it is INR 231 a day as against a minimum wage of INR 259.[17]

> India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) builds on the simple idea that people who have no better means of livelihood should have a right to be employed on local public works at a minimum wage. Other important entitlements under the act include payment within fifteen days, basic worksite facilities, and an unemployment allowance if work is not provided. The Act can serve many useful objectives: enhancing economic security, empowering rural women, activating gram sabhas, protecting the environment, restraining distress migration, creating productive assets, and promoting social equity, among others.
>
> The early years of NREGA were a time of hope and progress. Within a few months of the programme being launched (on 2 February 2006), millions of workers found employment at NREGA worksites. Women who had never earned an income of their own got a chance to work for the minimum wage at their doorstep. Gram sabhas gradually came to life in areas where they had rarely been seen before. Thousands of NGOs started awareness campaigns, social audits, and other NREGA-related activities. Corruption was fought step by step. Slowly but – it seemed – surely, things improved year after year, sustaining the hope.
>
> Five years on, it looked like NREGA could claim some real achievements. The scale of employment was staggering: 219 crore person-days in 2011–12, according to official data, largely reflected in independent survey data for the same year.[1] The majority of NREGA workers were women (who have a very low share of employment in the economy as a whole), and more than half were Dalits or Adivasis. Further, the programme helped rural workers in general, by putting some upward pressure on market wages. Much good also happened, and continues to happen, in terms of the other objectives mentioned earlier (Drèze, 2019).

Public criticism from neo-liberal economists and industrialists stems from fear—the fact that they, the privileged, see any distribution of wealth as a threat to their business and profits. However, political and economic theorists have internationally acclaimed and seen its value:

> The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) is a unique legislation not just in India but also among developing countries for the simple reason that no other developed, nor developing, country has enacted a right to employment. In simple terms, it guarantees 100 days per year of paid work, on demand and as a manual laborer, to every adult resident of rural areas. As a legislative act it provides for compensation in the form of an unemployment allowance for delays in wage payment and as compensation for failure of the government to provide jobs. It lays down guidelines for the process of seeking work and sanction of work as well as defining a wage-material ratio for the work itself. Since the NREGA was passed as an act of parliament, it is justiciable and it is this feature of the program that makes it different from other social protection initiatives of the government. For many, economists in particular, it represents an attempt to enshrine social security in a rights-based discourse: NREGA is seen as an attempt to recognize and legislate a full-fledged right to work. However, any attempt to understand the passage and implementation of NREGA solely as a social security scheme to help the poor is overlooking its political significance in altering and redefining the political economy of growth and redistribution in India (Jenkins & Manor, 2016).

[17] It translates to USD 2.81 and USD 3.15 respectively as on April 4, 2023.

2.2.2 Right to Work and the Fight for MGNREGA

MKSS's struggle has always been informed by ethics. Gandhi and Ambedkar have argued that peaceful political order cannot be achieved by politics alone; it has to be achieved along with other factors. For Gandhi, ethics played a major role, for Ambedkar, its constitutional values (DN, 1991; Singh, 2014). The methods adopted in our fundamental political struggle for this right were conceived in this context. Every forum and form was deliberated and had to adhere to the ethical framework of accountability and transparency, which the RTI struggle hoped to define. Inspired also by Gandhi's practical ethical wisdom in public action, we were constantly aware that the means must match the ends (Roy, 2018).

The speaker of the Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee, placed the NREGA on the floor of the house for its passage in the 14th Lok Sabha in 2005. There was great expectation, and people watching it on the televised broadcast were on edge. When there was unanimous assent in the House, shouts of joy broke out and joined the Minister for rural development to say, NREGA zindabad (Long live NREGA). Hundreds of thousands of workers all over the country saw the birth of real independence from economic need, and the promise of participatory democracy comes of age.

With the MGNREGA's employment guarantee scheme, adults in rural regions who are willing to perform unskilled manual labor are guaranteed 100 days' pay in a fiscal year, thus providing critical livelihood security to the marginalized (Kumar & Chakraborty, 2016; Singh, 2017).

"The single most innovative programme from India, lesson for the whole world, it was that programme (MGNREGA)," said Stiglitz, the Nobel laureate in Economics when asked how India can reduce inequality. Stiglitz was speaking on "Global Inequality—Causes and Consequences at an event organized by Azim Premji University, Bangalore. Elaborating on how to curb inequality, he said it is crucial to ensure full employment for the rural masses., Also a professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University in New York City, he further stated that, "One of the things most important is employment. And when there are high levels of unemployment, there is inequality" (IANS, 2016).

Its importance was first felt during the economic crisis of 2008 when it allowed India to largely tide over what the rest of the world was being affected by the economic meltdown. The rural economies thrived and the markets did not slump. The most emphatic endorsement of MGNREGA was during the COVID pandemic.

2.2.3 MGNREGA and COVID-19

India's millions of migrant workers were locked out by government diktat, over COVID, in 4 hours in 2020. Urban India had never witnessed migratory groups on the given scale and had to acknowledge the magnitude of the calamity. The virus of COVID was matched by the virus of unmitigated unemployment, poverty, and hunger, which awaited them, as they walked home (Adhikari et al., 2020; Iyengar & Jain, 2021; Jesline et al., 2021; Misra, 2022).

The government, the biggest employer, was protected from facing catastrophe and dealing with unimaginable destitution, by the existence of the MGNREGA (Lokhande & Gundimeda, 2021; Vasudevan et al., 2020). No other program functioned to provide employment in millions in villages across the country. However, the beleaguered private sector had a better track record of making payments, than the government provisions for MGNREGA. This was despite the PM's call for compassion for people who lost jobs. People lose hope when basic needs are not addressed.

An effective and alert government should have used this opportunity to build a lasting architecture of basic rights and benefits—food security, health, work, and wages, among other needs—to address possible, future occurrences of natural disasters.

2.2.4 Sustaining MGNREGA

The critics and the reactionaries in government fight the MGNREGA through fiscal cuts and delayed payments of wages. The piling backlog of wage payments is craftily used to downgrade allocations and at the same time destroy the faith of the worker in the guarantee of work.

There is a constant lament about the inefficiency of the system to deliver. The core reason is a malfunctioning bureaucracy. The suggested solution through privatization is not acceptable, because there is no guarantee or accountability in private contractual relationships between the people and private investors. The rights-based legislation sought to remedy the factors of basic needs, delivery, and transparent government, by decentralizing rights through legal tools and granting access (Kumar & Chakraborty, 2016; Roy et al., 2016; Singh, 2017) to "*roti, kapda, makan, swasth aur shiksha*," that is, basic living needs.

3 Conclusion

There are occasional seminars titled, "is Gandhi relevant" or "the world of Gandhi and his topical applicability." Parallel to this is the building up of a whispered and sometimes blatant narrative abusing and misrepresenting any theory that places people and not profit at the center of the socioeconomic political architecture. A large part of the economy is open to private business, which is indifferent to Gandhian, Ambekarite, and Socialist concerns for the last person, to empower the vulnerable.

The question is, Can India afford to ignore, negate, or set aside these paradigms of dealing with inequalities? The basic entitlement to work and the protection of traditional methods of production need to be sustained for a more compassionate economy and growth mode. The relevance of Gandhi in this context cannot be

questioned. To quote Albert Einstein, "in theory, theory, and practice are the same. In practice, they are not."

To find the ideals that drove the formation of the Indian republic, one would have to go to DPSP, Part 4 of the Indian Constitution. The DPSP laid the foundation of the vision of a free Indian Republic and reflected the needs of the people as its core, with equity and social justice as its guiding principles. The methods of getting there may have been different, but these core principles remained unchallenged. Post the early 1990 and market liberalization, the dominant thought is economic growth with no concern for either equity or the preservation of the environment and natural resources. The core idea of Gandhian trusteeship that could have been applied to future generations has given way to marauding resources for profits without any concern for the future. If one were to read the DPSP, the words "growth rate" do not find a single mention yet that is the only indicator used today to measure the health of the economy.

Where is Gandhian economics today? Despite the immense relevance of the idea, especially as we face imminent disaster through global warming and climate change, it is pushed to the margins. Principles of profit overwhelm all debates on "progress," pushing people's well-being to the margins. The neo-liberal economic framework so heavily reliant on the profit motive has destroyed almost every framework of self-reliance, simplicity, equity, redistribution, and even trusteeship. Today, it is not just Gandhian economics that is threatened but also that of the Ambedkarites, the Socialists, the Communists, and any ideology that brought in the principle of equality.

How does one then critique the present model that is neither helping the environment nor the sustainability of the earth? People-centered frameworks continue to bring common sense and the preservation of nonrenewable natural resources to the center of the debate. The critique, of the current exploitation of resources and people, is also there in implicit priorities defined in our constitution. Particularly, the DPSP in Articles 38–43, which should be used to measure economic success with equity and democratic guarantees of access to food, shelter, education, health, and housing. Those guiding principles and constitutional rights combined to partially stall the contemporary assault on peoples' rights, through enabling entitlements like the MGNREA, Forests Rights Act, and the Street Vendors Act. They have managed to create their own space, in a hostile environment. They all propagate, protect, and advocate the elements of Gandhian economics and Gandhian values for our common good.

The current economic model prioritizes profit maximization at the expense of social and environmental justice, resulting in widespread inequalities and exploitation of the planet. As such, there is a need for management and organizational studies scholars to draw lessons from Gandhian economics and remedies to address the negative impact of capitalism on people and the planet. Ignoring these issues would lead to disastrous consequences, including the perpetuation of inequalities and the exploitation of informal sector workers. Additionally, the greed and lust of a few could lead to irreversible damage to the planet, which would ultimately harm billions of people. It is, therefore, imperative that we prioritize people and the planet

in our economic decisions and embrace Gandhian remedies to cure capitalism. Failure to do so will result in our own nemesis, as our so-called success will eventually lead to our downfall. By taking a turn toward Gandhian economics and values, we can create an economic model that is compassionate, sustainable, and just.

Are we willing to use these parameters to measure growth and well-being, whether or not the global market rating agencies consider them of value?

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Extending Gandhian Philosophy to Mitigate Climate Change: The Idea of Energy Swaraj

Chetan Solanki

1 Our Times Have Changed: Climate Change Is Real

The days of policy dialogue that ignored or downplayed the impacts of climate change are over. Notwithstanding the fact that there has been insufficient action on the ground, it is now generally agreed[1] that this threat will represent the primary focus of policymaking for both the current generation and future generations to come (Bhatt et al., this volume-a; Berrang-Ford et al., 2011; cf. Bansal et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2022). The impact, on the other hand, is not confined to a particular place and has far-reaching consequences for all forms of life. This is the reason why a region with a negligible carbon footprint, such as Pakistan, is among the first to face the perils of climate change on a catastrophic scale, first with a significant drought and now followed by widespread flooding (Tan, 2022). The same is true for Bengaluru, sometimes known as the Silicon Valley of India, as well as other cities that are sinking along the foothills of the Himalayas, such as Joshimath (Rudrappa, 2022; Kanungo & Sharma, 2014). Typhoon Hinnamnor is expected to have effects that could endanger the lives of people in South Korea and Japan (Maishman, 2022). The region of Europe is currently going through the worst drought recorded in five centuries. During the current monsoon season in India's Uttar Pradesh state, 64 of

[1] Although there is a general agreement among the scientist and most of the policymaker, the social media induced polarization results in misinformation and disinformation campaigns (Qureshi et al., 2020, 2022a), which divide public opinions resulting in the pressure on the politicians (Bolsen & Shapiro, 2018)

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the state's districts have received below-average precipitation, and several of these districts are experiencing conditions similar to drought (Sajwan, 2022). In one way or another, each of these disasters can be traced back to the escalating effects of climate change. The impact of the threat has become so complex that all of the life-supporting components of the natural environment, including the air, water, soil, rivers, ice caps, and forests, have degraded to the point where it will be difficult to restore them to their previous state.

The global energy basket comprises carbon-based fossil fuels for 70–75% of its total volume (IEA, 2021). The burning of fossil fuels results in the emission of heat-trapping gases such as carbon dioxide (CO_2) into the atmosphere, which in turn causes an increase in the average temperature of the earth that is unprecedented in human history (Letcher, 2019). Since the beginning of the industrial age in the 1830s, human activities have raised the amount of CO_2 in the atmosphere by 50%; the current level of CO_2 is currently 150% higher than in 1750 (Betts, 2021). As a result of what is known as "global warming," the temperature of the globe has increased by 1.19 °C, and average temperatures worldwide are constantly climbing (Dang et al., 2022). As a direct result of global warming, many unfavorable consequences are occurring, including but not limited to rising sea levels, heatwaves, cyclones, flooding, droughts, and forest fires. These disruptive negative externalities also spread into the conventional human way of life. The rate at which the sea level is rising is currently twice as fast as it was 30 years ago, and this, along with the fact that carbon sinks all over the world, especially those in the Amazon rainforest, have been shrinking, has aggravated the issue further (Ziolo et al., 2019; Hoel & Kverndokk, 1996). Certain parts of the Amazon reportedly release more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than they absorb at the present time (Nepstad et al., 2008). Antonio Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, issued the following statement: "This is a code red for humanity." There are only 6–7 years left until the average temperature of the world exceeds 1.5 °C (Allen et al., 2018). He went on to say that on the very first day of the COP27 conference, "we have our foot on the accelerator to climate hell" (Sheppard, 2021). To call attention to how the ecological equilibrium and human civilization, as we understand them, were rapidly deteriorating, he further stated, "enough of brutalizing biodiversity, murdering ourselves with carbon, treating nature like a toilet, burning, and drilling and mining our way deeper." Incidentally, the climate activist Mr. Algore's assertion that humanity has a credibility problem because we keep talking about climate change without taking corresponding action is accurate in light of the current situation (Jacobsen, 2011).

On the other hand, it must be noted that the same period has also witnessed disruptive and positive changes led by science and technology, and the resultant GDP has seen an expansion. This is despite the deplorable state of all the components of nature essential for the sustenance of life. Even though the air quality index should be lower than 50 g/m^3, most Indian cities have an air quality index of 60 g/m^3 or higher (Ahuja, 2022). This makes it impossible to live a healthy life in these places. During the colder months in Delhi, the air quality index often falls between 400 and 500 g/m^3 most of the time. The index reached its highest level of pollution recorded

during the winter of 2021 in a part of the Delhi region (Outlook India, 2021). This level was 999 g/m^3. According to the database of the Air Quality Index (AQI), 92% of the world's population lives in places where the air quality is below the limits set by the WHO. As a direct result of this, air pollution is responsible for at least 4.5 million premature deaths each year (WHO Newsletter, 2021). Further, almost one-third of the world's forests, which are often referred to as the planet's lungs, have been cut down, which has depleted the major carbon sink available to the planet. By the year 2020, 1.5 billion hectares of forest will have been destroyed around the planet. The geographical area affected by this is projected to be equivalent to 1.5 times that of the United States (Environmental Performance Index, 2022). It takes nature millions of years to build up the nutrients in the topsoil, but in the last century, half of the topsoil has been washed away, and 33% of the soil that is still there has been degraded to the point of rendering it unfit for cultivation. Research indicates that by the year 2050, more than 90% of the world's soils will have degraded (ITPS, 2015). Water is necessary for life, but approximately half of the world's population lives in conditions of severe water scarcity for at least 1 month each year, and another 500 million people suffer from severe water shortages year-round (UNESCO, 2021). Water is a scarce resource in many parts of the world at present.

Beyond the bleak image that was portrayed before, the purpose of this study is to suggest a path in which climate change can be successfully mitigated in a time-bound manner. It takes the viewpoint of a practitioner and draws on the author's personal experiences gained during his nationwide Energy Swaraj Yatra, an awareness campaign that aims to inform and assist individuals in making the transition to environmentally friendly energy options such as solar power. In addition to this, the paper locates itself within the paradox literature to provide answers to the policy dilemma of focusing on growth at the expense of the environment. Also, it deploys the integrative social contract theory to explain collective action, and it rests its argument firmly on Gandhian principles.

2 The Energy Conundrum

In the current capitalist system, both social and economic growth depend on the availability of energy. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been organized into 17 categories by the United Nations (McCollum et al., 2018). Every single one of the SDGs is intertwined with energy consumption in some way, whether we're talking about health, education, inequality, industrialization, climate change, or even global peace and partnership (Javeri et al., this volume). In a fundamental sense, energy has an impact on every aspect of our environment. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the world's energy comes from carbon-based sources.

The year 1830 marked the beginning of industrialization led by Europe. Up until the year 1830, the entire human population relied solely on renewable energy sources such as wind, hydro, solar, and biomass for their means of subsistence,

albeit on a much more limited scale. After 1850, people started using coal as a source of energy for the first time. In the year 1900, people started using crude oil, and it wasn't until 1950 that natural gas was added to the mix of available fuels. In addition, since 1950, the amount of energy that the world consumes has nearly multiplied by ten. In 2022, the world's power came from various sources, including biomass, coal, oil, gas, hydropower, nuclear, solar, and wind. Even though significant progress has been made in the field of renewable energy technology, the vast bulk of the energy is still derived from fossil fuels. Even today, more than three-quarters of the world's energy consumption comes from carbon-based fuels (Ritchie et al., 2020). These fuels principally consist of coal, oil, and gas. About CO_2, the level of its concentration in the atmosphere, had stayed essentially unchanged at about 280 parts per million for many thousands of years. Up until 1850, when industrialization and the use of fuels based on carbon began, there was no discernible shift in the climate. Since then, both human activities and the generation of power through combustion have contributed to a rise in the number of CO_2 emissions. The amount of CO_2 that is present in the atmosphere is currently estimated to be 420 parts per million (ppm), and it is continuing to rise (NOAA, 2022). In some cases, the absorption of CO_2 can take as little as 40–60 years, while in other cases, it can take as long as 1000 years; nonetheless, the average lifespan of CO_2 is 300 years. It indicates that a choice made today to utilize carbon-based energy, which results in the emission of CO_2 into the atmosphere, will have long-lasting ramifications spanning over 300 years.

According to the IPCC, *drastic* and *immediate* adjustments in energy consumption behavior are required (IPCC, 2022). These adjectives are qualifying conditions for climate correction efforts that could form part of a larger collective environmental action taken worldwide. Taking inspiration from Gandhi's talisman (Austin, 2003), these two adjectives could form part of a new energy-based talisman to keep the primary stakeholders accountable. Every decision toward climate change mitigation should be checked for its time and impact dimensions. Between the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in 1998 and the signing of the Paris Agreement in 2015, the Conference of the Parties (COP) met annually to negotiate worldwide accords to cut carbon emissions. More than 180 countries have signed the Paris Agreement, and their goal is to reduce carbon emissions by approximately 50% by 2030. This task is now seen as highly difficult (Clémençon, 2016). Interestingly, annual carbon emissions are not decreasing but growing by around 1.7% (IEA, 2021). This leads us to a paradox. On the one hand, it is argued that reducing the effects of climate change should be our primary goal. Still, on the other hand, expansion of the population, country, or planet is considered necessary. Because the vast majority of growth is supported by energy based on carbon, it contributes to the instability of the climate. In point of fact, economic development necessitates an expansion of the energy supply, whereas climate change mitigation necessitates either a decrease in energy use or a transition to other sources of energy (Collins & Zheng, 2015; Edwards, 2021). The modern human race has not fully understood the implications of this contradiction, and even if they have, have we taken the right actions to address it? The purpose of the following part is to talk about this seeming

contradiction, which is deemed the sustainable growth paradox and affects a significant portion of the developing world's efforts to combat climate change through its policies and pledges. After that, we move on to the next step, which is to lay out the boundary conditions for how the energy mix can be reformed so that it relies on the solar energy potential of the world. In addition, for the purpose of putting the foregoing into action, a democratized approach that emphasizes energy consumption behavior is offered.

3 Paradox of Sustainability and Growth

Much of the growth strategy in place currently to alleviate poverty in the global south has historically relied on following the trajectory of the industrialized world (cf. Bhatt et al., 2013, 2022; Qureshi et al., 2023; Sutter et al., 2023). This included setting the contours of development policies and inadvertently including the aspirational imperative of the masses. However, the late twentieth century witnessed sustainability taking center stage in defining how well-being was perceived. Thanks to the rising greenhouse gases and resultant high temperatures. The climate negotiations of the twenty-first century are currently well anchored in questions of sustainability and lowering consumption and rightly so (Cohen, 2001). This begs the question of how distributed should be the efforts to curtail climate change be, given the biggest polluters exist in the global north and most of the marginalized in poverty are located in the south. Moreover, the current economic growth strategy for poverty alleviation, which primarily relies on increased production and consumption, will make the trajectory of the Global South very similar to that of the Global North, causing similar environmental consequences (Bhatt et al., this volume-a). Thus, it creates a paradoxical tension between economic growth and sustainability.

Edwards (2021, p. 3080) has highlighted this paradoxical tension, suggesting that "the pursuit of growth is undermining the capacity of Earth's atmosphere and biosphere to provide a stable basis for economic and social development." Indeed, this paradoxical situation in practice appears more complex than the much-touted Adam Smith's paradox of the ethical and economic dilemma, where he suggested that the pursuit of one's self-interest will cumulatively lead to better societal well-being (Collins, 1988). This logic of capitalism has been debunked and demonstrated through the climate negotiations, where developing countries such as India and China are treading a more delicate line. It is a line that balances their need for sustained economic growth while not exacerbating the already worsening climate situation. Both sides accuse each other of forcing a Faustian bargain. Suppose one were to follow the climate discussions in the Kyoto Protocol of 1998. In that case, it has been projected as the moral imperative to ensure that there is a distributed effort in curtailing the rise in temperatures and that the global south, especially the more populated countries of China and India, are to do more. However, these countries defined the moral imperative differently and insisted on equating greenhouse gas emissions on a just and fair model – per capita. This was fundamental to the

arguments put forward by the developing South, which was only starting on its aspirational trajectory. Incidentally, it also formed the basis for the more liberal transfer of expensive clean technology solutions and leeway in setting climate goals from the developed world (Collins & Zheng, 2015). A trade-off approach has been carefully threaded ever since. Today, one can see the demonstration of this in the differential climate targets set by various countries, which are on varied developmental spectrums. Thus, at least temporarily, there is no escaping the pursuit of one's self-interest as prescribed by Smith.

However, this paper posits itself as pushing for a long-term win-win approach instead of the more trade-off-based approach to dealing with the short-term sustainability growth paradox (Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015). This is done by focusing on one of the biggest factors in the emissions matrix: energy production. Energy use in varied industries contributes to almost three-fourths of all global greenhouse gas emissions. And incidentally, 2021 saw the highest year-on-year increase in carbon emissions from energy production, which was also the strongest coupling of global emissions with economic growth. The global GDP also expanded by 5.9% during that year, indicating how closely linked these two aspects are. In the case of India, thanks to its expanding population and urbanization, it is expected to witness the largest ever increase in energy demand by any scale in any country in the next two decades. It is currently the third-largest energy consumer and is also home to the second-largest population, of which one-fourth live in poverty (IEA, 2021). And as per a UN report, the country lifted over 415 million people out of poverty in the 15 years preceding the global pandemic (UNDP, 2019). This is where the sustainability growth paradox comes into question. To what extent do such regions compromise the global agenda on climate change and how should the efforts be distributed (Collins & Zheng, 2015)? The quest to reduce consumption, shrink economies, generate less energy, and all other degrowth strategies may seem more prudent once the minimum threshold of prosperity and well-being is achieved (Nicoson, 2021; Schwartzman, 2012). However, until then, it is necessary to ensure the growth engines of developing economies are well-oiled and operate more sustainably. Thus, ensuring that the bare minimum prescribed rests on an obligation to respect the dignity of every person and not force the marginalized to give more, thus ensuring distributive justice and equity (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999; Collins & Zheng, 2015). The argument rests on the premise that efforts by developing countries are located on ensuring basic well-being for their masses as accepted by the international community and not blindly following the growth trajectory followed by industrialized nations. A win-win approach in the short term ensures that both the questions of sustainability and growth are well answered (Van der Byl & Slawinski, 2015). This study attempts to shed light on how the energy demand in the short term can be met without compromising on the aspirational needs of the multitude. It proposes that by following the prescribed Avoid-Minimize-Generate (AMG) approach developing regions like India can adhere to the targets necessitated by the rising temperatures and ensure simultaneous growth of the marginalized communities, making it a win-win approach. It does not just help in achieving the

delicate balance of addressing the sustainability growth paradox but also brings attention to a more abundant and unlimited power source, solar energy, and through it, "Energy Swaraj."

4 The Idea of Energy Swaraj and Gandhian Philosophy

In modern society, there is a great dependence on energy use to an extent where it is inconceivable to survive without the use of energy (Javeri et al., this volume). Before abandoning the current carbon-based energy production and consumption model, it is crucial to identify viable alternatives. This will help sustain the developmental agenda of poverty alleviation. These alternative solutions must be ecologically sustainable, affordable, and easily adaptable.[2] This new energy production and consumption model must transcend the constraints of the current power production paradigm and ensure the sustainability of growth and, more significantly, the continuation of human life on Earth. And because this new model is to be implemented as a solution to climate change, it should facilitate "*drastic*" and "*immediate*" changes in energy consumption behavior, as proposed by the IPCC (Allan et al., 2021). This section presents the concept of "Energy Swaraj" or energy self-rule as an alternative model for energy production and consumption and as a means to resolve the paradoxes of sustainability and growth. Rooted in Gandhian philosophy, Energy Swaraj is a paradigm of producing and using energy locally via the utilization of locally accessible resources and with the participation of the local populace. With this new model, one must know the energy source, the boundary conditions for harnessing this energy from the source, and the methodology for creating and consuming energy to satisfy the requirement with zero or minimal environmental impact (Solanki et al., 2021).

It should also ensure that the localization results in a decentralized model of energy production, which helps in building self-reliance for these communities (Bhatt et al., this volume-b; Mishra & Shukla, this volume; Moolakkattu, this volume). India has doubled its energy consumption since the turn of the millennium, and over 80% of all production is attributed to just coal, oil, and solid biomass-based sources. The raw material for these carbon-based sources is mostly imported from foreign countries. COVID-related supply chain shocks, local resource constraints, and dependence on foreign exchange to procure these materials, further exacerbated by geopolitical tensions, have made the process cumbersome. If not the ecological impact of these fuels, their general scarcity and rising procurement costs have led countries to pursue alternative solutions to drive their economies. Of course, the climate negotiations and the resultant differential pledges of big

[2] For similar debate in the digital social innovation domain (Parth et al., 2021; Parthiban et al., 2020a, b, 2021; Qiu et al., 2021; Zainuddin et al., 2022) read literature on technoficing (Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c, d, 2022b, this volume) and sharing models at the base of the pyramid (Bhatt et al., 2021; Escobedo et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b).

polluters proved to be a shot in the arm to make this switch to alternative sources. Thus, moving toward a more abundant, distributed, and eco-friendly energy source such as solar is a no-brainer.

However, communities anchored in capitalism will once again proliferate on the production of such solutions on a massive scale, leading to carbon emissions and adding fuel to the sustainability and growth paradox noted earlier (Javeri et al., this volume). Massive manufacturing will eventually form the backbone of any such enterprise, but this study suggests a model where this production capacity is decentralized and made less capital-intensive (Mander, 2014). This paper suggests setting guardrails on how to pursue this endeavor. Anchored deeply in Gandhian philosophy (Iyer, 1986; Kumarappa, 1958), these guard rails, or rather principles, tread the line of limiting consumption and decentralizing production.

Fundamental Principle of Sustainability 1: "*In an ecosystem of finite resources, there must be finite consumption.*"

Fundamental Principle of Sustainability 2: "*In an ecosystem of finite resources, there must be distributed production.*"

The first essential principle of existence can be stated succinctly as "limiting our consumption," which is aligned with the Gandhian principle of Aparigraha (nonpossession) (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume). Additionally, to borrow from the *degrowth* literature (McAfee, 2019; Khmara & Kronenberg, 2018), which advocates that limiting consumption, especially by the higher income countries can offset the need for investing in alternative energy production resources in the developing world. Coined in 1972, the concept currently advocates for reducing consumption without curtailing economic progress. Instead, it points to new development models that pursue well-being in place of GDP as a measure of prosperity and how it can be achieved by limiting energy and resource throughput (McAfee, 2019; Khmara & Kronenberg, 2018). As Gandhi stated, "There is only enough for everyone's needs and not for anyone's greed." Before ecological discourse took over, Gandhi went a step further and spoke about the need for the altruism of the privileged (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume). He espoused the need for not just limiting consumption by the rich but distributing the wealth to the marginalized to ensure equity. His critique of bodily welfare and materialistic tendencies stemmed from the gluttony of industrialized consumption, which he termed a violent process where entities would fight for resources through violence and power. Limiting consumption at source would allow the opportunity to go up the aspirational trajectory more sustainably with a focus on non-materialistic well-being (Kumarappa, 1951). While it would take monumental efforts to limit consumption from a macroeconomic point of view as it forms a vicious paradox of higher consumption, more job opportunities, and resultant welfare, Gandhi provided a more plausible solution to the same. His tenet of "Gram Swaraj" holds that a community produces only what it needs and only relies on external sources of material needs, which are a necessity but whose products may not be practical in the given context. A behavioral change such as this would require a more ecosystem approach where there should be comprehensive changes in production and consumption patterns in a community and not in isolation, ensuring the

dignity and well-being of the populace are protected and thriving (Javeri et al., this volume). This would result in creating a space where pursuing one's self-interest resting on the decentralized production of energy through eco-friendly solutions such as solar power becomes a reality (Collins & Zheng, 2015). However, it must be noted that further research is needed in democratizing solar power solutions as the existing gamut of instruments does not guarantee decentralized production at a larger scale. High initial capital costs and lower output outside of the tropics may dampen its adoption in the short term, even though the cost per unit of power through solar has been falling steadily due to lower production costs. Interestingly, this is where the Gandhian tenets of trusteeship (Dantwala, 1978) came to the fore in the last IPCC discussions. The negotiations led to the establishment of a trust fund (IPCC, 2022), which would channel the development of affordable technologies and help lower-income countries with their adoption, all funded by higher and middle-income countries. Such transfer of technology from the north will help harness the global south's energy potential without sustained dependence on the former, making them self-reliant.

The second fundamental principle of sustainability, expressed briefly as "localizing production," complements very well the objectives of limiting consumption and the potential attainment of self-reliance (Mishra & Shukla, this volume; Moolakkattu, this volume). As noted earlier, centralized mass production invariably leads to unequal distribution, exacerbating the economic imbalance. As Gandhi advocated, the focus should shift to not mass production but production by the masses (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume). He stated this in light of the industrial production process, which eliminated the need for mass labor, which he rightly feared would render the masses without employment opportunities. Localized production of need-based objects is expected to result in a more equitable distribution of wealth and well-being than capital accumulation at one location (Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume-a, b). As Adam Smith echoed, the role of the state in regulating these processes remains relevant in case there is a drift from the stated objectives. Additionally, more stark positive externalities exist beyond the rejuvenation of the ecological balance through localized production. Akin to the production through the Charkha, as Gandhi symbolically envisaged (Ishii, 2001), localized production of solar implements would create jobs at the local level while also providing an accessible solution to power (Javeri et al., this volume). While it may be challenging to manufacture several aspects locally, given the availability of raw materials, its installation, maintenance, and repair could be undertaken by the local members of the community (Solanki et al., 2021). Skilling in such need-based vocations is consistent with Gandhi's teachings, who advocated the same through his Nai Talim concept (Sykes, 1988). Additionally, wealth creation at the local level through such sustainable solutions can also result in improved well-being and self-reliance. Incidentally, this model of Energy Swaraj could prove to be a win-win approach to mitigate the sustainability-growth paradox even in the long run, as at a macro level, there will be the democratization of affordable climate change solutions that also ensure well-being.

The adoption of solar technologies will require a multifaceted approach (Qureshi et al., this volume) that should make these solutions accessible to satisfy varied

needs in sectors as diverse as agriculture, cottage industries, and domestic usage. As noted earlier, the needs are diverse as the context is diverse (Bhatt et al., this volume-b; cf. Hota et al., 2023). A remotely located community may find favor with a captive solar plant located in their village with storage capacities established at the source rather than being connected to a broader grid to source power. Moreover, increasing storage capacities would require high and recurring capital investment in the long run, which may be made feasible only with state support. The paper suggests the AMG approach to establish broad contours for how solar energy adoption can be implemented in varied contexts. AMG stands for avoid, minimize, and generate. As the name suggests, it calls for a comprehensive change in consumer behavior that avoids unnecessary usage of power, be it in individual households or other places. This is followed by minimizing the same through the deployment of more energy-efficient mechanisms and further by attempting to generate the rest of the power required to satisfy the needs. This is discussed in detail further.

5 The AMG Approach

Adopting sustainable solutions and behavioral changes is a complex moral imperative that requires normative theories to guide its contextualization (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume). Theoretically, the paper posits the AMG approach as a demonstration of the Integrative Social Contracts Theory (ISCT), a normative theory that aims to provide direction to moral and ethical dilemmas (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994, 1999; Collins & Zheng, 2015). ISCT proposes moral responses based on social contracts, which could be either grounded in universal hyper norms such as dignity and well-being of people or, as proposed by Gandhi, ethical norms to be followed at the community or individual level (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume). The AMG approach attempts to empirically apply the ISCT at a micro-social contract level by appealing to changes at an individual and household level. Diverse factors must be factored in before following the two principles stated earlier, especially in countries such as India, where one can consider the opposite of anything to also be true. It is here where the AMG approach anchored in ISCT theory becomes relevant. It provides the necessary boundary conditions for the diverse population to adopt a universal technology such as solar.

Resting on the premise that prevention is better than cure and inspired by Gandhian ideals, this new approach calls for complete avoidance of the excess usage of power. Despite the abundance of solar power, the medium through which it is harnessed requires the production of certain implements, which could potentially be produced locally. At present, these are mass manufactured in distant regions where raw materials are easily available. Gandhi's way of life provides a suitable aspirational point for such an endeavor (Javeri et al., this volume; Roy, this volume). For instance, silicon-based solar panels require silicon crystal and silicon wafers, from which a solar cell is fabricated. To produce a solar module, glass, an aluminum frame, and polymer sheets are required. Then, galvanized iron is needed to build a

structure for mounting solar panels. To process or transport the power generated by solar panels, wires and power electronics are required. In order to store energy, one requires batteries. At the end of their useful lives, all materials that require additional energy must be recycled. This generates additional environmental damage (Huber & Steininger, 2022). Hence, avoiding or not using any energy as much as possible is the best choice for climate change mitigation. Alternatively, traditional knowledge and sustainable solutions in the market could be used, which do not consume energy as conventional appliances and means would. Such solutions should also traverse other sectors of the economy, such as architecture, construction, and mobility.

The second aspect of the AMG approach, which is already in practice is the deployment of energy-efficient technologies. Utilizing energy-efficient appliances helps minimize electricity consumption for a particular operation. At this stage, one should replace less efficient appliances with more efficient ones to reduce electricity use. For instance, using energy-efficient lighting can help us reduce our electricity consumption. LEDs are more energy-efficient than fluorescent lights. A typical commercial CFL bulb emits 50–60 lumens per watt, but a commercial LED bulb emits 110–120 lumens per watt. It means that for the same light output, LEDs require only half the amount of electricity. A 10-watt LED would produce the same amount of light as a 20-watt CFL lamp. Similarly, by replacing conventional tube lights with energy-efficient LED tube lights, one can save around 50% of the electricity, corresponding to a 50% reduction in CO_2 emissions (Thapar, 2020). Another example would be the use of energy-efficient motors in motor-powered appliances that typically utilize induction motors. Fans, water pumps, compressor pumps, etc. are available with DC motors in place of induction motors, resulting in a large decrease in energy usage. The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) of the Government of India recommends using appliances with a higher star rating when it comes to white goods. For instance, a five-star-rated 190-liter refrigerator saves 59% more energy than a piece of one-star-rated equipment. Similarly, a 1.5-ton air conditioner with five stars rating uses approximately 23% less electricity than a one-star equipment. The new inverter AC technology reduces electricity consumption by 30–35% compared to conventional AC. Modern DC compressor pumps are likewise energy-efficient. One can use energy-efficient freezers or air conditioners that run directly on DC electricity (i.e., solar) to conserve energy (Abhyankar et al., 2017).

Energy Swaraj is energy independence. In a contemporary world afflicted by climate change and energy stress resulting from the interdependence of nations on energy, Energy Swaraj would be a potent tool for creating a sustainable society. Following the avoid and minimize procedures, the final step in building Energy Swaraj would be to create energy locally based on demand. Once excess energy consumption has been avoided and the remainder reduced, the remaining electricity demand may be generated locally using solar power. Given the higher initial capital costs, this may necessitate state support through subsidies, assistance in acquiring components, and training of the local community in its use and maintenance (Setyawati, 2020).

6 Energy Swaraj as a Public Movement

The issue of climate change is the most potent form of violence in our times and affects every individual on the planet. While the above two fundamental principles and the suggested AMG approach involve active participation at a household level, efforts to mitigate climate change should find primacy at all societal institutions. This is primarily achieved through collective environmental action, whereby, by one definition, people of all demographics join together to bring about social transformation while also equipping them for such participation in the future. This endeavor is undertaken with the clarity that individual self-interest in the promotion of such ideals and perceived change will accumulate into broader societal benefits in building a sustainable future (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume). Gandhi himself is ideal for collective action against any kind of violence and even called poverty the worst form of violence (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume). His ideals with regard to collective action pursued a nonviolent path, inspiring and mobilizing mass action without the need for complex questions and answers. This calls for a Gandhian form of mass action at all levels of society, from the individual to the community, to make people aware of the violent nature of this issue (Hardiman, 2003; Lubell, 2002).

Inspired by Gandhi and the need to take drastic and immediate measures, the author embarked on an Energy Swaraj Yatra in the year 2020, which is expected to last over a decade until 2030. The objective is to make the population aware of the current challenges on the energy front and how Gandhian principles and the AMG approach could help form a resolution for it. Further, the need of the hour is to encourage similar efforts by others elsewhere, forming a mass action against the violent nature of the current crisis, which is detrimental to the Gandhian philosophy of love and harmony (Ghatak et al., this volume; Kumar et al., this volume; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume; Mehta & Jacob, this volume). In this endeavor, I attempt to shed light on the benefits of solar power, and I use a solar-powered bus to help me undertake this mission. This will help function as the primary energy source for this yatra and shines as a demonstration of the efficacy of adopting solar power.

Already over 770 days have passed since the inception of this yatra, and the stated objectives of spreading awareness about building self-reliance through solar power have been achieved. Behavioral change is seen almost immediately in some cases, as people are already facing power shortages and are using them judiciously.

7 Conclusion

Climate change, as it adversely impacts several aspects of our daily lives, is one of the most pressing challenges facing humanity. The current trend of development, wherein developing countries imitate the high production and consumption patterns of developed countries, is resulting in the release of additional greenhouse gas (GHG) and is environmentally unsustainable. Using avoid-minimize-generate

(AMG) principles in the sphere of energy provides a way to break out of the sustainability-growth paradox to find a win-win solution. Solar energy provides a viable abundant alternative for sustainably meeting the energy requirements for furthering the economic development of the global south. Adoption of Gandhian principles through limiting our energy consumption and localizing energy production can usher in the much-needed Energy Swaraj for tackling the pressing issue of climate change. Energy Swaraj Yatra is aimed at creating awareness and creating a mass movement around sustainable consumption and production of energy.

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Resilient Communities: A Way Forward

Babita Bhatt, Israr Qureshi, Dhirendra Mani Shukla, and Vinay Pillai

The future depends on what you do today.

M. K. Gandhi

1 Introduction

This book is an attempt to advance research on an alternative paradigm of development, which aims to develop a sustainable society based on justice, equity, care, and nonviolence and calls for responsible consumption, production, distribution, and innovation (Dasgupta, 1996; Bacq & Aguilera, 2022; Bhatt et al., this volume, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"; Parker, 2017; Parth et al., 2021). The increasing social inequalities, the development need of the base of the pyramid, and degrading ecological conditions have challenged the sustainability of this planet (Foster, 2012; Hickel, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated sustainability challenges and has put a question mark on the effectiveness of the traditional paradigms of development, which emphasize increased consumption, centralized production, and unequal access and distribution of finite resources (Bhatt et al., this volume, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview").

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In this light, this book extends the nascent stream of research on alternative paradigms by underscoring the relevance of the Gandhian perspective and exploring how Gandhian principles are inspiring social entrepreneurship. Several social organizations, included in this book, are striving to create resilient communities drawing on the core Gandhian values and principles of *Satya* (truth), *Aparigraha* (nonpossession), *Ahimsa* (nonviolence), *Sarvodaya* (upliftment of all), and *Swaraj* (self-rule/self-restraint). Drawing on contributions made by the chapters in this book, we present a model of resilient communities and explore pathways through which social organizations engage in creating them. In the below subsection, we explain this model and provide empirical evidence by referring to the information presented in different chapters of this book.

2 Resilient Communities: Exploring Pathways Through Social Entrepreneurship Rooted in Gandhian Philosophy

Resilient rural communities are those that possess the ability to adapt and bounce back from various challenges and changes. They are self-reliant and self-sufficient, with a strong sense of community and a focus on sustainable practices. They are mutually interdependent and able to overcome polarizing efforts (cf. Qureshi et al., 2020, 2022a) by vested interests. Gandhian principles of self-reliant, self-sufficient, and village-based development are closely linked to the idea of resilient rural communities (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., this volume, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"). Gandhi believed that villages were the backbone of Indian society and that they should be self-sufficient in their basic needs. He advocated for a decentralized economy that would empower villages to meet their own needs and reduce their reliance on external resources. In order to achieve this, Gandhi emphasized the importance of local industries, agriculture, and traditional crafts. He believed that these sectors could create employment and economic opportunities in rural areas while also promoting sustainable practices and preserving local culture. Resilient rural communities, therefore, embrace these Gandhian principles by promoting local industries, agriculture, and traditional crafts. They prioritize sustainability, conservation, and self-reliance. They work together as a community to support each other, share resources, and overcome challenges. By doing so, they create a strong sense of community, promote sustainable economic development, and ensure that their way of life is preserved for future generations.

2.1 Elements of Resilient Communities

We observe seven key elements of resilient communities: localization criteria, ownership by members, local exchange of products and services, community-based initiatives, leveraging the uniqueness of each community, mutual interdependencies, and sharing principles. Below, we provide explanations for each of these elements.

2.1.1 Localization Criteria

Localization criteria refer to the bases of defining local communities, which include sociocultural characteristics (e.g., caste groups, religious groups, norms, and cultural practices), available resources and skills, and physical remoteness. Localization criteria can help root initiatives in the place, which can enable wider acceptance. Initiatives rooted in the local history, culture, and political dynamics of the place can provide the basis for communities to come together and collaborate (Bhatt, 2017; Peredo & Chrisman, 2006; Qureshi et al., 2021a; Slawinski et al., 2021; Shrivastava & Kennelly, 2013). Moreover, localization criteria can help intermediaries design activities to overcome the resistance that may arise because of the presence of heterogeneous subgroups in the community based on caste or religion (Kumar et al., this volume, Part II, chapter "Sarvodaya to Nurture Peace Communities: A Case Study of ASSEFA").

However, a very deep understanding of the community characteristics such as social hierarchy, diversity, and distribution of resources among the community members is required to develop localization criteria and design interventions in accordance with the criteria. All the social organizations, covered in this book, have spent multiple decades with the communities to develop a deep understanding of the community context. For example, chapters by Mehta and Jacob (this volume, Part II, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir"), Qureshi et al. (this volume, Part II, chapter "*Technoficing*: Reinterpretation of Gandhian Perspectives on Technology"), Roy (this volume, Part II, chapter "Economics: Where People Matter"), and Mishra and Shukla (this volume, Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development") in this book highlight how Seva Mandir, Digital Green, Barefoot College, and Drishtee, respectively, have leveraged their decades of experience with the place-based communities to bring intervention as per the local community context.

Seva Mandir, with over 50 years of experience in the *adivasi* (indigenous) areas near Udaipur and Rajsamand districts of Rajasthan, has developed constructive programs appropriate for the local context and has been able to convince community members to build their collective capacity by cooperating with each other across caste, gender, class, and religion (Mehta & Jacob, this volume, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir"). In a similar vein, Digital Green also takes a place-based approach to contextualize its video creation and screening events. The choice of

best practices and approach to screening is deeply rooted in the sociocultural characteristics of the place (Qureshi et al., this volume, chapter "*Technoficing*: Reinterpretation of Gandhian Perspectives on Technology"). Similarly, Drishtee embeds all of its initiatives, including the choice of training modules and approach to the creation of micro-enterprise groups, based on the peculiarities of the place (Mishra & Shukla, this volume, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development"). Barefoot College on the other hand has successfully leveraged the solidarity among the marginalized crafts community empowering artisans and women to organize around their identity to build economic sustainability (Roy, this volume, chapter "Economics: Where People Matter"). A similar feature can also be seen in the work of SEWA (Part II, chapter "Cultivating Women Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of SEWA"), which highlights how the organization successfully built ownership structures and collectives for women to mitigate the impact of discriminatory gender norms. SEWA attempts to rally collective action for social change by relying on the concept of emotion-symbolic work (Barberá-Tomás et al., 2019) and provides a more nuanced understanding of the process of changing discriminatory gender norms. Thus, localization criteria are valuable for the development of resilient communities.

2.1.2 Ownership by Members

Ownership by members is another salient element of resilience in the community. Ownership, here, refers to the sense of responsibility and belonging of the community toward the initiatives undertaken to engender resilience. Thus, ownership signifies that communities have control over making decisions that can impact their own endeavors and destiny (Sarriot & Shaar, 2020). Ownership by community members is critical for the sustainability of initiatives undertaken to create resilience, as the primary aim is to build an ecosystem that is self-sustainable with few external dependencies. If community members identify with and take responsibility for the initiatives, they can commit materially and emotionally to making those initiatives impactful. Social organizations' role, thus, becomes important in implanting a sense of ownership among the community members and guiding them toward building resilient communities.

Most of the social organizations, included in this book, enable communities to take ownership of all the initiatives aimed toward building the resilience of the community. For example, ASSEFA (Roy, this volume, Part II, chapter "Economics: Where People Matter") creates village-level institutions and leverages them for pooling and governing community resources, which are used for developing sustainable livelihood opportunities. The village-level institutions are critical in imparting a sense of ownership in the community members by encouraging participation from all across castes, religions, and gender in decision-making. Village-level institutions further ensure that social groups are created based on trade and economic activities, rather than social markers, so that the group members feel a similar sense of responsibility, with little power distance that often results from

existing social hierarchies based on caste and gender. Similarly, Seva Mandir (Mehta & Jacob, this volume, Part II, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir") through its constructive programs has been able to build grassroots democracy, implanting a sense of ownership and responsibility among the community members. The organization feels that community ownership and empowerment are a must to realize the Gandhian idea of *Swaraj* or self-governance (Mehta & Jacob, this volume, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir"). Further, SELCO (Javeri et al., this volume, Part II, chapter "Balancing Equity, Ecology, and Economy Through Antyodaya Leadership: A Case Study of SELCO") through its decentralized renewable energy solutions locating itself in the principle of Antyodaya enables the local community to engage with them as partners and innovators. This has successfully resulted in expanding these partnerships into creating decentralized ownership and community structures through individual entrepreneurs, Self Help Groups, and Farmer Producer Organizations (Javeri et al., this volume, chapter "Balancing Equity, Ecology, and Economy Through Antyodaya Leadership: A Case Study of SELCO").

2.1.3 Local Exchange of Products and Services

The third element of resilient communities is the "local exchange of products and services," which refers to the occurrence of commercial and social exchanges among the local community members (Fiske, 1991; Pacione, 1997). Local exchanges between the community members are essential to make the local economy vibrant and reduce the outflow of value from the local systems (Pacione, 1997). Self-reliant communities engage in a high degree of internal exchanges of goods and services, rather than external exchanges, to minimize their external dependencies. However, most of the rural production and consumption these days is driven by market forces, causing serious threats to the sustainability of rural lives and livelihoods (Mishra & Shukla, this volume, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development"). Moreover, the dominant capitalist paradigm promotes extensive globalization and monetary-based transaction (Pacione, 1997; Starr, 1972). Thus, the localization of exchanges requires a shift in the paradigm.

In this regard, Drishtee (Mishra & Shukla, this volume, Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development") is doing phenomenal work in rural communities by promoting local exchanges between community members using an ecosystem approach. It uses a digital platform to match the demand and supply of locally produced products and leverages the digitally enabled barter system to enable local exchanges (Mishra & Shukla, this volume, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development"). The structured barter system goes beyond commercial exchanges and helps community members develop norms of trust and reciprocity. It further engages in building skills and capabilities of rural women to sense local market needs and produce accordingly using locally available resources. Drishtee believes that local exchanges are essential for creating self-reliant communities.

Similarly, Qureshi et al. (this volume, chapter "*Technoficing*: Reinterpretation of Gandhian Perspectives on Technology") with regard to Digital Green also allude to how reciprocal and iterative exchanges of information have led to building social sustainability among the participating agents in the Self-Help Groups.

2.1.4 Community-Based Initiatives

Another important element of resilient communities is community-based initiatives. It refers to the activities that require engagement from community members in all parts of the initiatives, including design, implementation, and governance (Collins et al., 2016). Community-based initiatives aim to empower community members as a whole, albeit valuing individual progress. Such initiatives provide a social platform for interaction and help enhance trust and social cohesion, which are essential for self-reliant communities (Bhatt 2017; Bhatt et al., 2013, 2021; cf. Qureshi et al., 2018a).

Most of the social organizations, covered in this book, appreciate the importance of community-based initiatives in promoting community resilience. For example, Roy (this volume, Part II, chapter "Economics: Where People Matter") underscores the importance of bottom-up participatory planning and development of craft-related markets in empowering the most marginalized in society, such as Dalit artisans and women. Similarly, Ghosh (this volume, Part II, chapter "PRADAN – Institution Building for Sustainable Development") highlight PRADAN's initiatives in developing sustainable livelihood opportunity for community members with effective use of technological and managerial knowledge. In a similar vein, Mehta and Jacob (this volume, Part II, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir") provide evidence from Seva Mandir's work to build grassroots democracy by promoting the participation of and dialogue among community members through their several constructive programs.

2.1.5 Leveraging the Uniqueness of Each Community

Another significant element in the model of resilient communities mentioned in Fig. 1 is "leveraging the uniqueness of each community." This refers to the approach taken by social intermediaries to engage community members in co-designing the development initiatives so that local skills, resources, and unique circumstances can be leveraged for sustainable solutions. Unlike a cookie-cutter approach, which is often taken by several development agencies to achieve scale at a rapid pace, this approach builds upon a very deep understanding of the key strengths of the local communities and requires designing solutions using a participatory bottom-up approach. Roy (this volume, Part II, chapter "Economics: Where People Matter") provides a good example of how Barefoot College identified *Tilonia's* uniqueness in

Fig. 1 Resilient communities

crafts-related work, where several artisans were engaged in various crafts, and how it took a bottom-up participatory approach to develop a craft-related market to support these artisans. Thus, Barefoot College could create sustainable livelihood opportunities for the artisans in Tilonia. Similarly, Mishra and Shukla (this volume, Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development") highlight how Drishtee implement its *Swavlamban* (self-reliance) model by identifying and leveraging the uniqueness of each community where they are operational. Drishtee is developing self-reliant communities across multiple states of India, including Bihar, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha. It takes a different approach as per the unique resources and skills available in the local communities. The focus of training and skill development along with the creation of and support to the micro-enterprise groups are dictated by the uniquely available resources in the community.

2.1.6 Mutual Interdependencies

"Mutual interdependencies" are another important element of resilient communities. It refers to economic, social, and ecological interdependence among the community members and acts as a glue to bind community members together (Barnaud et al., 2018; Bhatt et al., 2022; Presas, 2001). Mutual interdependencies can align the values, decisions, and actions of the community members and enhance cooperation and trust (Presas, 2001). Mutual interdependencies can be pre-existing in the communities or can emerge as community members engage in activities designed to leverage such interdependencies (Bhatt et al., this volume, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"). As highlighted by Bhatt et al. (this volume, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"), social organizations, which aim to develop self-reliant communities, engage in an iterative process of identifying existing emergencies, designing activities to leverage these emergencies across multiple initiatives, observing outcomes, and monitoring for emerging interdependencies.

Ghosh (this volume, Part II, chapter "PRADAN – Institution Building for Sustainable Development") highlights how PRADAN, based on its decades of experience in rural communities, could identify their existing economic and social interdependencies and started experimenting in Kesla (Madhya Pradesh), Barabanki (Uttar Pradesh), and Godda (Bihar) for poultry, leather, and tasar silk, respectively, to create livelihood opportunities for the most marginalized section. Similarly, Javeri et al. (this volume, Part II, chapter "Balancing Equity, Ecology, and Economy Through Antyodaya Leadership: A Case Study of SELCO") presents the case of SELCO as how it designed and implemented activities to leverage the economic and ecological interdependence of marginalized communities by providing affordable solar energy-based products. Further, they observed the emerging social interdependencies and responded by creating additional livelihood opportunities for marginalized women by training and skilling them in the installation and maintenance of solar products.

2.1.7 Sharing Principles

"Sharing principles" of a community is a central element of resilient communities. It refers to the values and norms that guide the act of sharing, which is *a social process of giving and receiving resources* (Qureshi et al., 2021a, p. 8). Sharing is important for self-reliance as it provides economic, societal, and environmental benefits to communities, driving their sustainability (Frenken & Schor, 2019; Qureshi et al., 2021a, b, c). Thus, sharing principles based on trust, cooperation, and mutual benefits can lead to enhanced social capital and cohesion (Bhatt, 2017; Bhatt et al., 2021; Escobedo et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2021a). Social organization,

included in the book, exemplify how these sharing principles are promoted and enacted in communities through effective social and digital intermediation.

For example, Qureshi et al. (this volume, chapter "*Technoficing*: Reinterpretation of Gandhian Perspectives on Technology") highlight how Digital Green, a social intermediary, engages in digital social innovation to promote sharing of resources and knowledge through the process of *technoficing* (Qureshi et al., 2021d, 2022b, 2023, this volume, chapter "*Technoficing*: Reinterpretation of Gandhian Perspectives on Technology"). The contextualization of digital technologies (e.g., video creation tools and data and resource-sharing platforms) to fit the social reality is at the core of this process. Moreover, this process relies on trust and cooperation among the community members, enhancing the quality of social interaction and improving productivity. Similarly, Mishra and Shukla (this volume, Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development") present how Drishtee has created a rural ecosystem, including a digital platform-based barter system, to promote sharing among the community members. Drishtee considers interdependence and sharing as primary drivers of self-reliance. In this light, the digital platform-based barter system can enhance mutual trust and promote sharing. In a similar vein, Kumar et al. (this volume, Part II, chapter "Sarvodaya to Nurture Peace Communities: A Case Study of ASSEFA") highlight how ASSEFA, inspired by Gandhian Sarvodaya philosophy, promotes communal sharing by embracing Gramdaan (modified Community Land Trust) model and creating village-level institutions to the pool and govern resources among the marginalized.

In sum, the contributions made in this book extend the extant understanding of resilient communities. The cases of social organization covered in Part II of this book provide evidence of how social entrepreneurship inspired by Gandhian principles can help create resilient communities. Synthesizing evidence from these social organizations, we presented the model of resilient communities in Fig. 2. The seven elements explained above provide a comprehensive and evidence-based view of community resilience. We believe that our attempt to synthesize the extant research and practice of Gandhi-inspired social entrepreneurship (Gandhian Social Entrepreneurship) can trigger further discussions on the relevance of the Gandhian

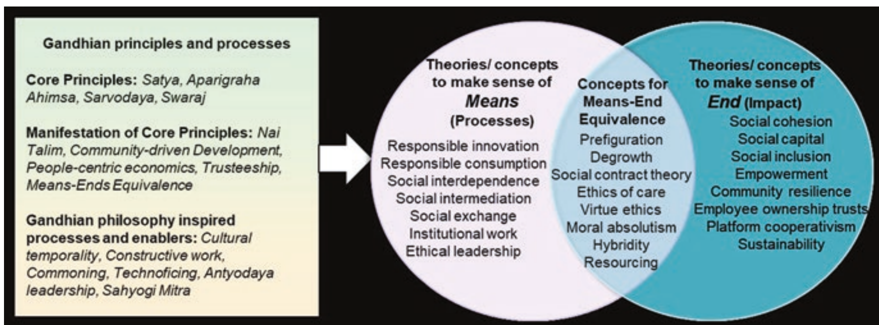

Fig. 2 Integration of Gandhian tenets with various theoretical lenses

perspective in the post-COVID world and stimulate future research. In the following subsection, we first summarize the theoretical underpinnings of the contributions made in this book and then provide directions for future research.

3 A Summary of Theoretical Underpinnings of Chapters of This Book

The chapters presented in the first two sections primarily draw upon theoretical perspectives such as commoning, ethical leadership, social intermediation, technoficing, social sustainability, social interdependence, ecosystem perspective, and diversification strategy (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2023; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"; Qureshi et al., 2021d, 2022b, 2023, this volume, chapter "*Technoficing*: Reinterpretation of Gandhian Perspectives on Technology"). While the empirical context of all the chapters belongs to the Indian region, there are diverse themes that each of the cases in Part II draws upon. These themes include community land trust and village institutionalization, self-help groups and professional assistance, financial intermediation, human resource and livelihood development, community videos and appropriate technology, structured barter system, organizational development, women empowerment, energy decentralization, rights-based issues, and the potential of solar power. All of which can contribute to de-complicate the distress faced by the marginalized and drive intermediation efforts in India and elsewhere.

In the first chapter in Part I (chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"), authors Iyengar and Bhatt deploy the concept of Gandhian trusteeship to provide an alternative paradigm to prescribe a renewed ethical role for businesses. Highlighting the ethical and moral roles of business leaders from a trusteeship perspective, the authors contribute to the literature on ethical leadership in the business community and how sustainable development can be achieved through socially responsible businesses. In a similar vein, the chapter by Bhatt and Qureshi on constructive work (Part I, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work") sheds light on the potential of this Gandhian tenet to help intermediaries in navigating power relations while undertaking community-driven development. It makes a valuable contribution to the community development paradigm by providing directions for emergent and existing social intermediaries to deploy constructive work and cultural temporality (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023) to engage in social intermediation. On the other hand, drawing on the degrowth theory and neoclassical economics, Moolakattu in his chapter (Part I, chapter "Gandhian Approach to

Development: Implications for the Post-COVID World") relies on the Gandhian village self-reliance model to argue how a reorientation of the contemporary order of economic consumption from individualized consumption to an ecologically intensive mode will help build sustainability. Adding to the potential of Gandhian tenets in solving contemporary issues, Patil and Sinha (Part I, chapter "School Education for Today: Extending Tagore and Gandhi's Idea of a Good Society (*Swaraj*) and Its Accompanying New Education (*Nai Talim*)") in the last chapter in Part I contribute to the understanding of educators and governments in the field of school education. It suggests a new approach to the educational model driven by an expanded understanding of the Gandhian interpretation of productive work. Educators and policymakers will benefit from this perspective in building a case for education for sustainable development practices.

The subsequent Part II draws from Gandhian Thought to locate the evolution and functioning of social organizations in the Indian context, making contributions to the social entrepreneurship and organization studies literature significantly. The first among them by Kumar, Pillai, and Qureshi (Part II, chapter "Sarvodaya to Nurture Peace Communities: A Case Study of ASSEFA") study the pioneering case of a Gandhian intermediary, ASSEFA, which relies on the community land trust model to build self-reliant and harmonious communities. By focusing on diverse intermediation efforts and being among the first of its kind in the independent Indian context, the authors highlight how the organization was able to help build an ecosystem, contributing to the literature on ecosystem perspectives to solve grand challenges. Ghosh takes the discussion forward with his treatise on PRADAN (Part II, chapter "PRADAN – Institution Building for Sustainable Development"), a social intermediary that relies on professional assistance to drive rural development. The author highlights the efficacy of professional assistance in building self-reliant communities, thus adding to the social intermediation literature.

In a similar vein, the chapter on Basix (Part II, chapter "Basix Social Enterprise Group: Inclusive Development"), a financial intermediary, by Mahajan and Qureshi traces its evolution through the founder's eyes to argue the relevance of microcredit and financial services in the intermediation process. It also discusses how the organization was able to diversify to build a multifaceted set of livelihood-related interventions, thus contributing to the diversification and ecosystem perspectives. Next, Qureshi, Pandey, Shukla, and Pillai (Part II, chapter "*Technoficing*: Reinterpretation of Gandhian Perspectives on Technology") discuss the case of a digital intermediary and its efforts to deploy appropriate technology for social development and building social sustainability. Drawing on the appropriate technology literature and Gandhian Thought, it contributes to the emerging technoficing process along with the social sustainability paradigm (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2023; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"; Qureshi et al., 2022b). Misra and Shukla's work on Drishtee (Part II, chapter "Swavlamban by Drishtee: Gandhian Perspectives on Village-Centric Development"), a social enterprise follows with its unique story of a structured barter system to drive the building of self-reliant communities. Drawing on the

scaling literature and social intermediation theories, it highlights how the organization had to scale up and eventually switch to an ecosystem approach in the rural context due to the diminishing urban focus and associated costs.

Mehta and Jacob (Part II, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir") follow with their case of a Gandhian social organization that focuses on building grassroots democracy and capabilities to enable the marginalized to take up responsible commoning (see also, Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2023; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"; Qureshi et al., 2022b). Contributing to the commoning and organizational development literature, it also provides an example of how the Gandhian tenet of Trusteeship is deployed within an organization to drive this endeavor and help women participate (cf. Maurer & Qureshi, 2021). Ghatak et al. (this volume, Part II, chapter "Cultivating Women Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of SEWA") come next with their study on a women's self-employment organization. Building on social interdependence, the chapter sheds light on how the women's organization uses the banyan tree approach to form new functional and business entities under its umbrella, all independent of each other yet interconnected. It also makes valuable contributions to women's entrepreneurship literature.

Next, drawing on ecosystem perspectives, Javeri et al. (Part II, chapter "Balancing Equity, Ecology, and Economy Through Antyodaya Leadership: A Case Study of SELCO") present the case study of SELCO, an organization that has deployed innovative decentralized renewable energy solutions to address rural distress and poverty. By partnering with the marginalized in its operations and by keeping them at the center of all their decision-making and planning mechanisms, the authors highlight how the study contributes to the leadership literature on the marginalized sections of society. The last two chapters of Part II call for collective action to solve the problems of contemporary times including that of climate change.

Further, Roy in her work (Part II, chapter "Economics: Where People Matter") reflects on her journey through the Barefoot College, a social organization and the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, which she founded, to discuss how bottom-up participatory approaches should also factor in the dignity of the individual at its core and how cooperative helps to build market access and create value for the community. It also sheds light on the value of public action and cites the example of the struggle, which demanded a legislative provision for livelihood guarantees for the marginalized. The study contributes to social entrepreneurship literature and builds on a critique of the neoclassical economic paradigm. The next chapter (Part II, chapter "Extending Gandhian Philosophy to Mitigate Climate Change: The Idea of Energy Swaraj") on the concept of Energy Swaraj by Solanki echoes the potential of public and collective action in solving the problems of climate change. Drawing from a critique of neoclassical economics and its consumption-led paradigm once again, it posits itself at the intersection of Gandhian economic alternatives of limiting consumption and localizing production. By proposing alternative solutions to deal with the sustainability-growth problem, it makes a valuable contribution to paradox literature as well.

As summarized above, in addition to the Gandhian lenses, chapters in the book draw on various theoretical lenses such as social interdependence, social intermediation, ethical leadership, social sustainability, and ecosystem perspective. Below, we provide how this book can act as a catalyst to trigger future research to explore the implications of these theoretical lenses for self-reliant communities.

4 Directions for Future Research

Figure 2 summarizes directions for future research. It suggests the relevance and potential implications of Gandhian principles (core and manifested) and observed processes, described in the overview chapter (Fig. 2), for future research. It underscores how some of the theories that explain means (processes) and end (impact) can be extended using Gandhian principles or informed by the processes observed in various cases covered in this book.

As summarized in the overview chapter (chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"), contributions made in this book explore how Gandhian principles inspire social organizations in nurturing resilient communities. These organizations leverage processes such as *cultural temporality, constructive work, commoning,* and *technoficing* to nurture resilient communities. Additionally, *Antyodaya leadership* and *Sahyogi Mitra* enable these processes. Contributions made in this book integrate Gandhian lenses (principles and processes) with several complementary theoretical lenses such as social intermediation, social interdependence, ecosystem perspective, degrowth, prefiguration, and ethical leadership. Drawing on these contributions, we suggest that Gandhian lenses can help extend several theories, which have relevance to the development and social entrepreneurship literature. In Fig. 2, we have summarized some of the theories that can be extended using Gandhian lenses or informed by the empirical cases presented in this book. We broadly classify these theories as *Means* (*processes*) and *End* (*impact*), based on their relevance in explaining the process and impact, respectively, of nurturing resilient communities. In Fig. 2, the overlapping part of the means and end constitutes a set of theoretical lenses, which suggest inseparability and equivalence of means and end. In other words, similar to the Gandhian principle of means-end equivalence (Gandhi, 1972), these theoretical lenses underscore that the end of social transformation initiatives/movements cannot be predetermined and viewed separately from the processes that are followed to achieve that end, thus minimizing the possibility of the end justifying the means (Bhatt & Qureshi, Part I, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Maeckelbergh, 2011).

4.1 Theoretical Underpinnings with Focus on Means

4.1.1 Responsible Innovation

Responsible innovation is a complex, collective, inclusive, and interactive process of value creation that aim to meet societal needs and ethical requirements (Bacq & Aguilera, 2022; von Schomberg, 2013; Wang et al., 2022). This perspective builds on the paradigm of shared responsibilities among science, society, and policy, thus involving multiple stakeholders (Bacq & Aguilera, 2022; Owen et al., 2012). Thus, responsible innovation is a process through which means and ends of innovation are responsibly managed by multiple stakeholders (Bansal et al., 2014) and has a strong resemblance with Gandhian values and principles. Gandhian principles such as *Ahimsa* (nonviolence) and *Sarvodaya* (upliftment of all) can inform this stream of research by providing a framework to evaluate innovations based on their attributes to meet the ethical requirement and societal desirability. Moreover, Gandhian lenses such as Swaraj and Trusteeship (Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability") can inform the multi-stakeholder and responsible management of the process and outcome of innovation. Future conceptual and empirical research can explore the relevance of Gandhian principles and processes for responsible innovation.

4.1.2 Responsible Consumption

Responsible consumption refers to the act of making informed and conscious choices when purchasing and using goods and services. It involves considering the environmental, social, and ethical impacts of consumption and striving to minimize negative effects (Parth et al., 2021). Responsible consumption is closely linked to sustainability, as it aims to promote more sustainable production and consumption patterns.

In the context of Gandhian philosophy, responsible consumption is linked to several key concepts. Aparigraha, or nonpossession, emphasizes the need to reduce our attachment to material possessions and live a simpler, more sustainable lifestyle. Ahimsa, or nonviolence, emphasizes the need to avoid harming others and the environment, which can be achieved by consuming in a responsible and ethical manner. Commoning is another concept that is relevant to responsible consumption in the Gandhian context (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2023; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Dombroski et al., 2019; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"; Qureshi et al., 2022b). It refers to the idea of sharing and collectively managing resources, rather than treating them as private property (Hota et al., 2023; Meyer, 2020; Peredo et al., 2018; Qiu et al., 2021). By engaging in common practices, individuals can reduce

their consumption and environmental impact while promoting social cohesion and community well-being (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2023; Dombroski et al., 2019; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"; Qureshi et al., 2022b). Technoficing is also linked to responsible consumption, as it emphasizes the need to use technology in a way that is simple, sustainable, and in harmony with nature (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2023; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"; Qureshi et al., 2022b). This can involve reducing our dependence on technology and using it in a more responsible and mindful way.

Thus, responsible consumption aligns with many of the key values and principles of Gandhian philosophy, including nonpossession, nonviolence, commoning, and technoficing. By consuming in a more responsible and ethical way, we can promote sustainability, social justice, and a more harmonious relationship with the natural world.

4.1.3 Social Interdependence

Several theoretical lenses such as social interdependence, social intermediation, social exchange, hybridity (in social entrepreneurship research), institutional work, resourcing, paradox, ecosystem, and ethical leadership can be extended using Gandhian lenses in explaining the process of nurturing resilient communities. For example, mutual interdependencies are identified as one of the key elements of resilient communities. Gandhian principles such as *community-driven development*, *trusteeship*, and *Nai Talim* and processes such as *Constructive work* and *Commoning* can extend the social interdependence perspective in explaining how mutually beneficial interdependencies are identified and initiatives are designed to leverage such interdependencies.

Additionally, the extant research, drawing broadly on the social interdependence perspective, suggests different facets of interdependencies, including economic, societal, and ecological (Barnaud et al., 2018; Johnson, 2003; Presas, 2001). However, the interrelationships among the three facets of interdependence are relatively less explored. The Sarvodaya framework, process model of nurturing resilient communities (Fig. 1, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"), and evidence from cases used in this book indicate interrelationships among the three dimensions of interdependence. Social organizations trying to leverage mutually beneficial economic and social interdependencies by designing appropriate activities have the potential to influence the nature of ecological interdependencies among community members. For example, if activities rely on excessive utilization

of scarce natural resources, it can pose threat to sustainability, hence necessitating social organizations to factor in the potential emergence of ecological interdependencies at the time of designing activities for community members (Barnaud et al., 2018). In this regard, Gandhian lenses such as *Aparigraha*, *Ahimsa*, *Sarvodaya*, and *Swaraj* can guide how to conceptualize and manage the interrelationships among different types of interdependencies while nurturing resilient communities.

4.1.4 Social Intermediation

The social intermediation perspective considers social value creation as the main objective of social intermediation (Kistruck et al., 2013a). Unlike commercial intermediaries that aim to maximize the appropriation of economic value, social intermediaries aim to create social value and enable communities to maximize the appropriation of the economic value (Parthiban et al., 2020, 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qureshi et al., 2022b, 2023). The cases presented in this book highlight the intermediating role of social enterprises in building self-reliant communities and thus have implications for the social intermediation perspective (Kistruck et al., 2008, 2013a, b; Parthiban et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2023). Extant research suggests that social intermediaries leverage processes such as technoficing and commoning to create social value (Qureshi et al., 2021d, 2022b). Cases of Digital Green (Part II, chapter "*Technoficing*: Reinterpretation of Gandhian Perspectives on Technology") and ASSEFA (Part II, chapter "Sarvodaya to Nurture Peace Communities: A Case Study of ASSEFA"), covered in this book, also provide evidence of how processes of *technoficing* and *commoning* are, respectively, leveraged by social intermediaries to build self-reliant communities (see also, Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2023; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"; Qureshi et al., 2022b). However, despite the increasing interest in understanding the processes of social intermediation (Parthiban et al., 2021; Pillai et al., 2021a, b; Qureshi et al., 2021a, d), the extant understanding is limited. Future empirical studies can contribute to the understanding of this perspective by drawing on these Gandhian lenses. For example, empirical studies that address research questions such as how Gandhian lenses such as *cultural temporality*, *constructive work*, *commoning*, and *technoficing* can influence the processes of social intermediation or how social intermediaries enact Gandhian principles such as *trusteeship* and *means-end equivalence* in creating resilient communities can advance our understanding about the processes and outcomes of social intermediation.

Further, chapters of this book provide examples of how social intermediaries, inspired by the Gandhian principle of *Sarvodaya*, attempt to bring prosperity and well-being to all in a community by exhibiting Antyodaya leadership. However, the

implication of *Sarvodaya* and *Antyodaya leadership* for social intermediation research is yet to be fully understood. For example, there is little empirical evidence on whether or not social intermediation inspired by *Sarvodaya* or *Antyodaya leadership* creates the desired societal impact in mitigating exclusion and bringing well-being for all. An emergent stream of scholarship, however, suggests that social intermediation can help mitigate extreme marginalization (e.g., Bhatt et al., 2019, this volume, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"; Hota et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2017, 2018b, 2023; Riaz & Qureshi, 2017; Sutter et al., 2023). We call for more empirical research in this stream to develop a deeper understanding of the implications of *Sarvodaya* or *Antyodaya leadership* for the processes and outcomes of social intermediation (Kistruck et al., 2013a).

4.1.5 Social Exchange

The social exchange perspective explores the motivations and outcomes of various tangible and intangible exchanges that individuals or collectives engage in their daily lives (Blau, 2017; Cook et al., 2013). Social exchanges can create a sense of unspecified obligation and lead to a reciprocal relationship between the exchanging parties (Blau, 2017). Trust plays a crucial role in enabling social exchanges (Cook et al., 2013; Davlembayeva et al., 2020). Chapters in this book have underscored the relevance of Gandhian principles in enabling social exchanges and enhancing social cohesion and mutual interdependence among community members (Bhatt et al., this volume, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"). Gandhian lenses can enhance the extant understanding of motivations and outcomes of social exchanges. For example, principles of *Aparigraha* or *Trusteeship* can inform the social exchange perspective by reconceptualizing the nature of obligation involved in social exchanges. Similarly, commoning can influence the outcome of social exchange (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2023; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"; Qureshi et al., 2022b). We believe future empirical studies integrating Gandhian lenses with the social exchange perspective can enhance understanding of the mechanisms and processes involved in social exchanges and their impact at the community level.

4.1.6 Institutional Work

Institutional work emphasizes the agentic *role of individuals and organizations in creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions* (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Hota et al., 2023; Parthiban et al., 2020; Qureshi et al., 2023). Extant research has advanced institutional work as a theoretical lens to understand how

social enterprises and community members create new or transform existing institutions in marginalized contexts (Bhatt et al., 2019; Parthiban et al., 2020; Qureshi et al., 2016). Some of the social organizations covered in this book exemplify how they draw on Gandhian principles of *Sarvodaya*, *Swaraj,* and community-driven development and leverage constructive work to create and maintain village-level institutions while challenging the existing institutions (Kumar et al., Part II, chapter "Sarvodaya to Nurture Peace Communities: A Case Study of ASSEFA"; Mehta & Jacob, Part II, chapter "Gandhian Thought in Seva Mandir", also see Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023). Drawing on these observations, we believe Gandhian lenses have much nuanced implications for the Institutional work literature. For example, Gandhian lenses such as Aparigraha and Ahimsa can inform not only the end goals of institutional work but also the sociopolitical processes through which newer institutions are created. Similarly, the principles of Swaraj and Trusteeship can inform the characteristics of newer institutions required for building resilient communities. Thus, we call for future empirical research to explore the implications of the integration of Gandhian lenses and Institutional work for nurturing resilient communities.

4.1.7 Ethical Leadership

Further, cases included in this book underline the crucial role of leadership in building self-reliant communities through the empowerment of the most marginalized in the community (*Antyodaya*). This kind of leadership is defined as *Antyodaya leadership*, referring to the process of structuring activities and creating a socially conducive environment to empower the most marginalized in the community (Javeri et al., this volume, Part II, chapter "Balancing Equity, Ecology, and Economy Through Antyodaya Leadership: A Case Study of SELCO"). Given its focus on empowerment of the most marginalized, *Antyodaya leadership* style is apparently different from the other leadership styles such as ethical and servant leadership (Lemoine et al., 2019). However, future empirical studies exploring *Antyodaya leadership* can shed more light on the concept and nomological network of this kind of leadership style. For example, future research can explore how Gandhian views such as nonviolence and trusteeship shape the style of *Antyodaya leadership* (Javeri et al., this volume, chapter "Balancing Equity, Ecology, and Economy Through Antyodaya Leadership: A Case Study of SELCO"). Further, as *Antyodaya* aims to create a just and equitable society (Gandhi, 1947; Iyer, 1986; Kumarappa, 1958), it may be interesting to explore how *Antyodaya* leaders maintain or create social harmony in social contexts divided into the lines of caste, class, gender, and religion (Bhardwaj et al., 2021).

4.2 *Theoretical Underpinnings with Focus on End*

4.2.1 Social Cohesion

Social cohesion refers to solidarity, mutual trust, cooperation, and shared values in the community (Escobedo et al., 2021; Sampson et al., 1997). Extant research considers social cohesion as a desirable state of the community (Escobedo et al., 2021; Laurence, 2011; Sampson et al., 1997). Thus, it provides a suitable perspective to understand the End (impact) from a Gandhian perspective. The Gandhian principles such as Sarvodaya, Swaraj, and Trusteeship can help extend the understanding of the means that help reach the end goal of social cohesion. Further, future studies can explore how processes such as constructive work and commoning can help bridge the social divides across caste, class, religion, and gender to achieve social cohesion (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023).

4.2.2 Social Capital

Social capital refers to the norms of reciprocity, mutual trust, shared values, and cooperation among community members that help them pursue shared goals (Bhatt, 2017; Putnam et al. 1993). Like social cohesion, social capital can be considered one of the defining characteristics of resilient communities (Bhatt, 2017; Bhatt et al., this volume, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"). Communities with higher social capital, exhibiting strong relationships, share resources and pursue collective goals of shared prosperity (Qureshi et al., 2021c). Gandhian lenses can enhance the extant understanding of the processes through which community social capital is built. For example, it can explore how principles of trusteeship or processes such as constructive work help communities build social capital (Bhatt & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work"; Bhatt et al., 2022, 2023).

4.2.3 Social Inclusion

The social inclusion perspective highlights that the provision of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and healthcare does not guarantee social inclusion (Bhardwaj et al., 2021; Cherayi & Jose, 2016; Simplican et al., 2015). There is a need to ground decentralized affirmative action and community development programs in principles of human rights, dignity, and equality. Evidence suggests that individuals who are socially embedded are more likely to undertake civic participation, contribute to

strengthening democratic institutions, and have better health and educational outcomes (Simplican et al., 2015). But this empowerment involves addressing challenges that span structural inequalities and power imbalances, which are detrimental to their full participation in society or in ensuring full access to resources (Javeri et al., this volume, chapter "Balancing Equity, Ecology, and Economy Through Antyodaya Leadership: A Case Study of SELCO"). Researchers need to devolve more effort into unravelling how the nuances of such imbalances and how they can be mitigated. These include issues of social and political marginalization and poverty (Qureshi et al., 2018b; Zainuddin et al., 2022). In this regard, Gandhian lenses provide a complementary view to understand how the role of community ideals and the role of leadership in including the most marginalized in the community. In particular, future empirical studies can further develop the idea of *Antyodaya leadership* and examine its effectiveness for the social inclusion and upliftment of the most marginalized.

4.2.4 Empowerment

Empowerment is another end goal that characterizes resilient communities and has great resemblance with the Gandhian principle of Sarvodaya. Empowerment entails a reduction in the power differences, in terms of personal, interpersonal, or political power, that underlies the existing social system (Breton, 2004; Gutierrez, 1990). This empowerment perspective highlights the importance of community organization techniques and other emancipatory practices in enabling empowerment (Gutierrez, 1990). Chapters in this book provide empirical evidence about how several social organizations strive toward creating a just and equitable society by empowering the marginalized sections. We call for more empirical research to enhance understanding of the Gandhian-inspired processes, such as cultural temporality and constructive work, leveraged by social organizations to empower marginalized people.

4.2.5 Community Resilience

Community resilience refers to the ability of a community to adapt and recover quickly from adverse economic, environmental, political, or social conditions (Cutter et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2022). Community resilience researchers have identified several attributes of the communities such as adaptability, collaboration, and social cohesion (Cavaye & Ross, 2019; Jewett et al., 2021; Stablein et al., 2022). Bhatt et al. (this volume, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview") have provided the Sarvodaya framework, a process model to develop resilient communities, and highlighted how Gandhian principles have inspired several social organizations in nurturing resilient communities. We believe contributions made in this book provide a suitable platform to extend the research on community resilience. Future studies can explore how Gandhian principles such as *Satya*,

Aparigraha, and *Ahimsa* impact the community's collective decision-making, which helps them not only cope with the adverse situation but also recover quickly (Robinson & Carson, 2016). Similarly, future empirical studies can investigate the relevance of *cultural temporality* and *Antyodaya leadership* in developing community resilience.

4.2.6 Employee Ownership Trust

Employee ownership trust (EOT) is a legal structure that allows business owners to transfer the ownership of their organization to a trust on behalf of their employees (cf. Pierce et al., 1991). The trust becomes the legal owner of the company, and the employees become the beneficiaries of the trust. The employees may then receive distributions of the profits of the company and, in most cases, may also have a say in the management of the company (Wren & Ridley-Duff, 2021). The EOT model is often seen as a way to promote employee ownership and participation in the workplace, which can lead to higher levels of job satisfaction, productivity, and innovation.

The concept of *Sarvodaya*, a guiding principle of Gandhian philosophy, is closely related to EOT. Sarvodaya means "the upliftment of all," and in this context, it refers to the idea that the well-being of society as a whole should be the ultimate goal of any economic or social system. The EOT model can be seen as a way to promote *Sarvodaya*, by ensuring that the ownership and management of the company are in the hands of the employees who work there (cf. Nuttall, 2022).

Trusteeship is another *Gandhian* concept that is closely related to the EOT model. Trusteeship is the idea that wealth and resources should be managed for the benefit of all, rather than for the benefit of a few. In the context of business ownership, this means that the owners of a company should act as trustees, managing the company for the benefit of all its stakeholders, including employees, customers, and the wider community (Nuttall, 2022). The EOT model can be seen as a way to promote the principle of trusteeship, by ensuring that the ownership and management of the company are in the hands of a trust that is legally obligated to act in the best interests of the employees (cf. Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"). This can create a sense of shared ownership and responsibility among the employees and can promote a more egalitarian and participatory workplace culture. Moreover, the EOT model can be seen as a way to promote the Gandhian principle of nonviolence, or ahimsa. By giving employees a stake in the ownership and management of the company, the EOT model can promote a more peaceful and cooperative workplace culture and can help to reduce the potential for conflict between employees and owners.

Thus, the EOT model can be understood and explained in various Gandhian principles and is a legal structure that allows business owners to transfer the ownership of their company to a trust on behalf of their employees. The model is closely related to the Gandhian concept of Sarvodaya, as it promotes the idea of the welfare of all.

The EOT model can also be seen as a way to promote the Gandhian principle of trusteeship, by ensuring that the ownership and management of the company are in the hands of a trust that is legally obligated to act in the best interests of the employees. Finally, the EOT model can promote the principle of nonviolence by promoting a more peaceful and cooperative workplace culture.

4.2.7 Platform Cooperativism

Platform cooperativism presents an alternative view of how value is created using platforms based on the notion of cooperation, concern for community, participation, and autonomy (Mannan & Pek, 2021; Scholz, 2016). Thus, unlike the widespread capitalist view on the value creation logic of a platform economy, this perspective highlights the role of shared ownership and democratic governance, offering a possibility to benefit all rather than only a few (Sandoval, 2020). Given the focus of this perspective to create alternatives to the dominant capitalist paradigm, we believe Gandhian lenses such as Aparigraha, Swaraj, and Trusteeship can help extend the research of platform cooperativism. For example, the principle of *Aparigraha* (nonpossession) can extend the understanding of the logic of cooperativism from shared ownership to nonpossession and accordingly explore how commoning can help achieve platform cooperativism. Similarly, the principles of *Trusteeship* and *Swaraj* can help understand how the cooperatively created value is distributed and governed to provide an effective alternative to the dominant capitalist paradigm.

4.2.8 Sustainability

Sustainability has been one of the widely researched areas over the last few years, and scholars have widely agreed on the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social (Bansal et al., 2014; Fischer et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2022). However, most of the extant understanding of sustainability falls in the dominant paradigm, which is based on the notion of infinite growth and unabated consumption. Given the current societal and ecological challenges, scholars have started questioning the tenacity of the assumptions of the dominant paradigm and call for the exploration of alternative paradigms (Bhatt et al., this volume, Part I, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"; Foster, 2012; Hickel, 2019; Mair & Rathert, 2021; Parker, 2017). Only recently, an emergent stream of research in the sustainability domain has started exploring how sustainability could be pursued using alternative models (Bhatt et al., 2021; Hota et al., 2019; Kistruck et al., 2013a; Qureshi et al., 2021b). However, the extant understanding of these alternative models is still limited (Barin Cruz et al., 2017). In this regard, Gandhian tenets, such as trusteeship and self-reliance, can provide an alternative paradigm to reconceptualize sustainability (Dasgupta, 1996; Qureshi et al., 2021b). For example, future empirical studies can advance the research on alternative paradigms of sustainability by exploring how social organizations or

communities enact *trusteeship* to achieve sustainability. Moreover, researchers can examine the implications of Gandhian principles such as *Aparigraha*, *Ahimsa*, *Sarvodaya,* and *Swaraj* for sustainability (Dasgupta, 1996; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, Part I, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume, Part II, chapter "Basix Social Enterprise Group: Inclusive Development").

4.3 Theoretical Underpinnings Emphasizing Inseparability of Means and End

4.3.1 Prefiguration

Prefiguration refers to a set of practices in which means and ends are "mirrored," as it involves enacting practices that relate to some feature of an "alternative world" (Bhatt et al., 2023, this volume, chapter "Nurturing Resilient Communities: An Overview"; van de Sande, 2015; Yates, 2015). Prefiguration relies on the view that means and end are inseparable, and end cannot be predetermined or used to justify means (Maeckelbergh, 2011). Prefiguration is a future-oriented and action-driven philosophy that emphasizes creating the "alternative world" with the shell of the existing world, rather than protesting against the existing structures (van de Sande, 2015). Thus, prefiguration has a strong resemblance with the Gandhian principle of means-end equivalence. Bhatt and Qureshi (this volume, Part I, chapter "Navigating Power Relations in Community-Driven Development: An Exploration of Constructive Work") elucidates how Gandhian principles and processes can complement the Prefiguration literature to enhance the extant understanding of the process and practices involved in prefiguration. Future empirical research can shed more light on the practices and processes of prefiguration by drawing on Gandhian lenses. For example, Gandhian principles of *Aparigraha*, *Ahimsa, Swaraj, and Sarvodaya* can not only guide the conception of the "alternative world" and the norms, practices, and decision-making processes that constitute the alternative world (i.e., end) but also inspire the paths (i.e., means) to enact those norms, practices, and processes in the present.

4.3.2 Degrowth

Degrowth refers to an alternative political and economic philosophy that calls for less production and consumption (Kallis, 2017; Hickel, 2020). The dominant economic philosophies assume prospects of infinite growth and tightly link growth with well-being. However, if economic growth requires extensive use of resources, then economic growth can pose sustainability challenges (Kallis, 2017). Thus, a new economic model that can view economic growth not as an end in itself but oriented to serve human needs by being subservient to ecological thresholds holds the key to

building self-reliant communities. Ecological sustainability, social justice, and well-being would find primacy in this new model. Such an economic order would find support in degrowth as well as Gandhian literature. Both streams advocate a shift toward a more decentralized, localized, and equitable economy that can prioritize well-being over growth. However, it begs the question of how the community's aspirations are factored in or to what extent one should localize or decentralize production (Dietz & O'Neill, 2013). Societal norms and values based on consumerism and economic growth will require a shift to accommodate this line of thought, examples of which are currently scarce. It offers scholars an interesting opportunity to explore how this shift can be achieved peacefully (Hickel, 2020; Kallis, 2011). In this regard, Gandhian principles of *Ahimsa* and *Aparigraha* can be integrated with the Degrowth literature. Similarly, the Gandhian principles of Sarvodaya and Trusteeship complement the Degrowth literature to provide a better alternative that is based on social justice and responsible production and consumption.

4.3.3 Social Contract Theory

Social contract theory (SCT) has been used in various domains with an underlying basic principle that individuals give up some of their rights to superordinate authorities, for example, their organization, their government, their local association, their housing governance body, in exchange for certain implicit guarantees from their protection and social order (Bucar et al., 2003; Demuijnck & Fasterling, 2016; O'Brien et al., 2009). According to SCT, individuals enter into a social contract with the authority, where they agree to abide by the norms, laws, and regulations established by the authority in exchange for the protection and provision of public goods. Social contract theory can be understood in the terms of Gandhian principle of means-end equivalence (Richards, 2005), as it suggests that the authority must use just and ethical means to achieve its goals and provide public goods and that the ends pursued by the authority must be consistent with the social contract established between the authority and the individuals. In other words, the authority must use means that are consistent with the social contract and the ends sought through that contract. This reinforces the idea that the means used to achieve a particular end must be consistent with the end itself, which is a central tenet of the Gandhian concept of means-end equivalence.

4.3.4 Ethics of Care

The ethics of care is a moral theory that emphasizes the importance of relationships, compassion, and empathy in ethical decision-making (Bhatt, 2022; Hota et al., 2023; Parton, 2003; Slote, 2007, also see Pettersen, 2008). This theory suggests that moral considerations should not only be based on abstract principles or rules but

also on the particular needs and circumstances of the individuals involved in a situation (Bhatt, 2022; Till, 2012). The ethics of care prioritizes caring for and attending to the needs of others, particularly those who are vulnerable or marginalized (André & Pache, 2016; Hota et al., 2023; see also, Bhatt, 2022; Hechavarría et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2016). The ethics of care aligns well with the Gandhian concept of means-end equivalence because of its emphasis on respect for all beings and treating them with kindness and compassion and recognizing their inherent value as individuals. Furthermore, both the ethics of care and the Gandhian concept of means-end equivalence highlight the importance of considering the means used to achieve a particular end. The ethics of care emphasizes the importance of attending to the needs and circumstances of individuals in ethical decision-making, and the Gandhian concept of means-end equivalence emphasizes the importance of using means that are consistent with the end sought. Thus, the ethics of care and the Gandhian concept of means-end equivalence share a common emphasis on compassion, respect for all beings, and the importance of considering the means used to achieve a particular end.

4.3.5 Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics is a philosophical approach to morality that emphasizes the importance of personal character and virtues in ethical decision-making (Kamtekar, 2004; Doris, 1998). According to this theory, moral behavior arises from the cultivation of virtues such as honesty, courage, compassion, and justice, which are seen as essential for living a good and fulfilling life. In virtue ethics, the focus is on the agent rather than the action or the consequences of the action, that is, an action is considered morally right if it is performed by a person, who acts in accordance with the abovementioned virtues they have cultivated over time (Moore, 2002, 2005; cf. Bhatt, 2022; Hota et al., 2023). The concept of means-end equivalence is closely related to virtue ethics because it emphasizes the importance of personal character and virtues in achieving moral ends. Thus, a virtuous person has over time cultivated virtues such as honesty, compassion, and justice, critical ingredients of the means-end equivalent approach. Moreover, Gandhi, being a virtuous person himself, was known for practicing what he preached, which is consistent with the virtue ethics approach that emphasizes the importance of acting in accordance with one's virtues. For Antyodaya leaders, honesty, compassion, and justice are core virtues, as they help such leaders be honest about the alignment between means and end (cf. Ziegler & Groenfeldt, 2017). Thus, virtue ethics is a moral theory that emphasizes the importance of personal character and virtues in ethical decision-making. The concept of means-end equivalence is closely related to virtue ethics because it highlights the importance of ethical means in achieving moral ends.

4.3.6 Moral Absolutism

Moral absolutism is a philosophical position, which asserts that certain actions are inherently right or wrong, regardless of the circumstances in which they are performed (Hawley, 2008; cf. Pellegrino, 2005). In other words, moral absolutists believe that there are objective moral truths that apply universally and that moral principles are not dependent on subjective factors such as culture or personal opinion (Leone et al., 2019).

The Gandhian concept of means-end equivalence is closely related to moral absolutism because it emphasizes the idea that certain means are inherently right or wrong, regardless of the ends they are used to achieve. According to Gandhi, the means used to achieve a goal must be ethical and justifiable in themselves and cannot be justified by the goal they are intended to achieve. For example, if one wants to create a just society, one must use just means to achieve that goal. This is consistent with the idea of moral absolutism, which holds that certain means, such as violence or deception, are always wrong, regardless of the ends they are intended to achieve. Therefore, the concept of means-end equivalence in Gandhian philosophy can be seen as a form of moral absolutism, because it holds that certain means, such as violence or deception, are always wrong, regardless of the circumstances in which they are used.

4.3.7 Hybridity

Hybridity highlights the need for social enterprises to pursue both commercial and social objectives for the creation of economic and social values (Hota, et al., 2023). However, it also emphasizes the contradictions inherent in pursuing dual objectives (i.e., social and commercial), which create paradoxical tensions (Hota, 2023). Scholars have increasingly called for more research to understand the mechanisms and processes that help social enterprises navigate the resulting hybridity tensions (Grimes et al., 2020; Mongelli et al., 2019). We believe managing hybridity tensions require an approach that resembles the means-end equivalence of the Gandhian principle. For example, the pursuit of commercial objectives using unethical or illegitimate means cannot offer an excuse to meet societal objectives. In this regard, Gandhian lenses can advance the debates in hybridity research (in the social entrepreneurship domain). *Satya, Aparigraha, Ahimsa, Sarvodaya, Swaraj, and Trusteeship* can guide social entrepreneurs in navigating the hybridity challenges (Hota et al., 2023; Iyengar & Bhatt, this volume, chapter "Trusteeship: Gandhian Approach to Reconceptualize Social Responsibility and Sustainability"; Mahajan & Qureshi, this volume, chapter "Basix Social Enterprise Group: Inclusive Development"). Future empirical studies can contribute to the hybridity literature by exploring how Gandhian values and principles help social entrepreneurs manage hybridity tensions.

4.3.8 Resourcing

Resourcing refers to the process of acquiring and allocating resources in an effective and efficient way to achieve organizational goals (Feldman & Worline, 2011). According to resourcing theory, resources are defined as anything that allows an actor to *enact a schema*, emphasizing that innate qualities of things give them potential as resources until action is taken to use them, making them resources in use (Sutter et al., 2023). This theory also highlights how the use of resources is influenced by shared understandings. Actors with different cognitive or cultural understandings about the resources will use the same resources in distinct ways, resulting in different outcomes (Sutter et al., 2023; cf. Feldman, 2004). An understanding of this shared aspect that guides resource use can provide insight into the implications of the resourcing process for addressing social issues (Pandey et al., 2021; Sutter et al., 2023). For example, the provision of resources to marginalized communities can lead to very different outcomes depending on the schemas guiding their use (Bhatt et al., 2022; Sutter et al., 2023).

In the context of resourcing, means-end equivalence implies that the resources used to achieve organizational goals should be consistent with the goals themselves. For example, if an organization aims to promote sustainable development, it should use resources that are environmentally sustainable and socially responsible (Bansal et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2022). If an organization aims to promote equality and social justice, it should use resources in such a way that promotes these values. This link to resourcing theory became more evident because the way resources are acquired and allocated should also be in line with our values and principles. By ensuring that the way resources are put to use to achieve organizational goals are consistent with those goals, resourcing can help organizations promote their values and achieve their desired outcomes in a manner that is ethical and sustainable. Moreover, the Gandhian concept of means-end equivalence can help organizations to think more critically about their resource use and allocation. By requiring organizations to consider the ethical implications of their resource use and allocation, means-end equivalence can help to promote more responsible and sustainable resource management practices.

4.4 Geographic Context

Additionally, most of the research that explores the alternative paradigm of development has been conducted in an underdeveloped context (e.g., Bhatt et al., 2019, 2023; Hota et al., 2023; Qureshi et al., 2023; Sutter et al., 2023). However, the issues of social inequality, leading to the marginalization of a substantial part of society, and challenges to sustainability have become prominent in developed countries as well (Qureshi et al., 2021a; Zink, 2019). Thus, empirical studies, across the globe, that

explore how various organizations and communities are experimenting with alternatives can shed light on new processes and mechanisms to promote sustainable societies (Hickel, 2019; Mair & Rathert, 2021; Parker, 2017). Moreover, as Gandhian principles have become relevant for the entire world (Bawa, 1996), we call for empirical research from both developed and developing countries to understand its usefulness in promoting a just and equitable society. Further, future studies can conduct a comparative study to explore Gandhian perspectives and other alternative paradigms, such as degrowth, to understand their implications for the practice and research of social entrepreneurship.

4.5 Methodological Contributions

The concepts and cases included in this book can provide a foundation to develop more rigorous qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method empirical work to advance research in the area of Gandhi-inspired social entrepreneurship. For example, in-depth ethnographic or qualitative studies can help understand the processes and mechanisms used by Gandhi-inspired social entrepreneurs in creating resilient and self-reliant communities. Further, future studies can operationalize the constructs of "resilient communities" and "self-reliance" and use survey-based quantitative studies to examine which characteristics of the community or broader ecosystem can help attain these end goals. In this regard, the model of self-reliant communities in the chapter (Fig. 1, this chapter) can provide theoretical guidance to operationalize "resilient communities." In a similar vein, future studies can leverage randomized control trials (RCT) or other quantitative techniques to assess the societal impact of activities initiated with an aim of developing resilient and self-reliant communities. Finally, future studies using a mixed-method approach can provide deep insight into the processes and outcomes of Gandhian social entrepreneurship.

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