

India as a Model for Global Development

India as a Model for Global Development

Edited by

Mahmoud Masaeli
and Monica Prabhakar

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



India as a Model for Global Development

Edited by Mahmoud Masaeli and Monica Prabhakar

This book first published in 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2018 by Mahmoud Masaeli, Monica Prabhakar
and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-1658-X

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1658-8

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Notes for the Readers	vii
<i>Mahmoud Masaeli</i>	

Part I: Gandhian Thought and its Relevance for the Development of Modern India

Chapter One.....	2
Swami Vivekananda—Bridging Indian Morality: Modern Economic Needs of India	
<i>Monica Prabhakar</i> (University of Delhi, India)	
Chapter Two	19
Perceptions of Islam and Muslims by a Hindu Mystic: A Study of Thanwardas Lilaram Vaswani's Thought	
<i>Amit Sampat</i> (House of Wisdom, Netherlands)	
Chapter Three	37
A Gandhian Perspective on Entrepreneurship: The Social Responsibility Paradigm	
<i>Nafisa Habilbhai Kattarwala</i> (Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies & Higher Education, India)	
Chapter Four	48
Mahatma Gandhi and Empowerment of Women	
<i>Rajashree Padhi</i> (Central University of Jharkhand, India)	
Chapter Five	57
Rajni Kothari: Vision of an Indian Postcolonial Development	
<i>Neville Gustad Panthaki</i> (Independent Researcher, Canada)	

Part II: Social, Political and Economic Development in India Today

Chapter Six	76
Satyagraha and Social Justice in India	
<i>Saroj Kumar Rath</i> , (University of Delhi, India)	
Chapter Seven.....	96
Industrialization and Economic Modernization: A Lead from India's	
Post-Colonial Maturity	
<i>Niladri Sekhar Dhar</i> (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India)	
Chapter Eight.....	113
Human Capital Fostering Service Sector as an Element in Economic	
Growth	
<i>Meghna Dutta</i> (Goa Institute of Management, India)	
Chapter Nine.....	140
Lost Performance and Short Film: <i>Behrupiya</i> on the Stages of Global	
Capitalism	
<i>Carlos M. Roos</i> (Leiden University, Netherlands)	
Chapter Ten	160
India: An Emerging Medical Tourism	
<i>Manisha Mishra and Joyheel Shrivastava</i> (O.P. Jindal Global University,	
India)	
Chapter Eleven	174
India's Giants: Tata Group Industry Example	
<i>Casey Brunelle</i> (Independent Researcher, Canada)	
Chapter Twelve	183
Emergence of 'New Women' in Urban India: Exploring the Changes	
in Buying Roles and Media Portrayal in the Wake of Globalization	
<i>Soma Sengupta and Anjan Sen</i> (University of Delhi, India)	

NOTES FOR THE READERS

MAHMOUD MASAEI PH.D.

India is the most attractive of the emerging market economies for prudent investors who seek to avoid uncertainty in the market and political instability. No longer suffering from fragility, the world's largest democracy is enjoying an economic boom leading the country towards a competitive capacity in sectors such as business process outsourcing, information technology, and pharmaceutical industry at the international level. Offering a pool of qualified scientists, chemists, and lab technicians with the lower-costs has also added a unique attractiveness for global drug industry. In the 1990s, economic reform signalled economic growth to an average of 7.8 percent a year. Today, this fast growing and diverse economy is made up of an economically productive landscape and an attractive location for service industry. Passing through the ups-and-downs in economic growth, the country could achieve one of the largest adjustments among the developing countries and reached a resilient consolidated economy. In comparison to 1991, India has now quadrupled growth of \$5.8 billion to \$279 billion, and exports from \$18 billion to \$178 billion. After 27 years of economic reform, per capita income grew; purchasing power parity (PPP) jumped to the top of the region; power generation, consumption and telecommunication expanded considerably; and the share of industry and service took the lead over agriculture. In addition to this, labour force and employment has signalled a sustained progress. Confirming a 7.9% growth in GDP in 2016, Morgan Stanley, the investment bank, sees an accelerate trend in 2018 stimulated by growth in consumption, public capital expenditures and external demand. This growth reflects remarkable changes in the living condition of Indians. Morgan Stanley analyses this bolstering living condition in terms of moderation in inflation, improvement in purchasing power, wage increase for employees of the government, benefits from the lower interest rates, pickup in job growth and improvement in rural demand. The ups-and-downs that sway the global economy, inflicted less harm on the Indian economy than the other emerging economies. How, and why did India grow relatively faster and better than any other emerging economy?

Should the main reason be only searched for in the politics of liberalization started in 1976 and accelerated in the early 1990s, in which its success is measured by shifts and digits?

One may point out India's initiative for economic stabilization to restore the balance of payment and to control inflation in the early 1990s. This initiative was accompanied with the structural adjustment policies. This mixture of stabilizing and adjustment policies aimed at *bringing about rapid and sustained improvement in the quality of the people of India. Central to this goal was the rapid growth in incomes and productive employment: "Within a generation, the countries of East Asia have transformed themselves. China, Indonesia, Korea, Thailand and Malaysia today have living standards much above our...What they have achieved, we must strive for (Government of India, 1993)." A systematic liberalization policy in 1992 was a crucial step taken to open the domestic economy to global system of trade and capital including global financialization. The end of the Cold War, the emergence of China as a giant player in the world trade, and the experience learnt from initial stages of liberalization, encouraged India to accelerate the liberalization of trade with the purpose of penetrating into the global markets. At the centre of liberalization policy, the twin policy of the trade-related openness and finance-related relaxation helped the country's potential to turn into a market policy for growth. This symbiosis of the vital sectors could absorb tremendous investment and financing. At the centre of the reform lies the improved property rights by the new government which could lift India's position on the Baseline Profitability Index for foreign investors. Reforms for considerably reducing the perceptions of corruption, strengthening protection of minority shareholders due to the Companies Act of 2013 which enabled firms to file a single compliance report for central-government labour laws gave a boost to the country's economy. These reforms are completed in taxation, subsidies, labour regulations, and privatization (BNY Mellon, 2015). Reforms have transformed the face of Indian livelihood in rural and urban contexts.*

Other transformations must not be ignored. A shift away from import substitution industrialization towards export-oriented growth in the early 1990, played a key role in the success of the country. In pace with the independency trends in the developing countries in 1980s, India also adopted a trade import substitution policy. In accordance with this strategy, which rapidly became popular in many of the developing countries, the exploitative import policies must be tailored in favor of the national wellbeing. Although some successful stories such as Japan and

South Korea can be referenced, Indian import substitution, the same as many other developing countries, lasted longer without boosting economy. Evidently import substitution policy failed to boost economy due to the absence of the country as a player in international trade and finance. The result was tragic for many countries adopted this policy because of being trapped in reduction of income. Policy makers-underestimated the importance of exportation and international trade orientation causing loss of export opportunities. Massive increase in import of machines and other capital-led goods, and decrease in the export, impeded not only the process of development, but also caused deficit in balance of payments.

The 1990's economic reforms transformed this illusive strategy of growth. Consequently, along with Brazil, China, and a few other developing countries, export-led and market-based policy was adopted. The new policy signaled an immense potential for liberalization of trade with the threefold aim of preventing the flow of the capital, absorbing foreign capital, and accelerating economic productivity. The new export-led and trade liberalization policies were completed with complementary measures. Fiscal and monetary sectors reformed, which resulted in an accelerated abolition of licensing for import, relaxed dispute settlement policies, reduction in customs duties to end anti-export bias, devaluation of Rupee by 20 per cent in the early stages of the liberalization reforms, convertibility of Rupee, liberalisation of control over exports, duty-free import of capital goods for use in production for exports, advance licences for imports against exports, exemption from tax and credit subsidies, the duty drawback Scheme, and incentive to exports of services were adopted to boost economy (Kapila, 1994).

A gradualist increase growth in the role of the private sector through decreasing and disinvestment of government in the public sector to open up the economy to trade and foreign investment has also been analyzed as another reason for economic growth of the country. Power generation, hydrocarbon exploration and refining, freeing air transportation from the monopoly of the public sector, and the relative privatization of telecommunication sector fall within the reformist strategy to increase the role of private sector in economy and trade. Encouraging private sector investment in capital stock through financial flows played also a significant role as well.

Despite the enormous progress, complex issues such as poverty, corruption, inequality at both the inter-religious and inter-personal level, stable growth, structural restrictions, and employment issues have tempered the

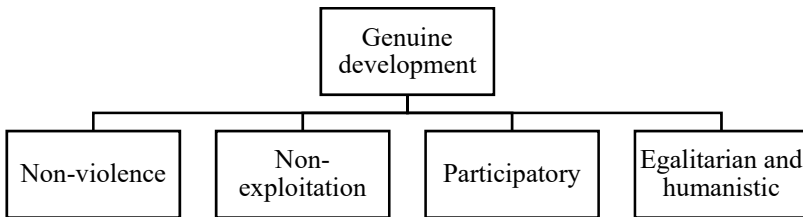
economic growth of the country as a model. Besides this, hesitation on a harmonious development encountering economic growth and socio-political as well as cultural and human development proved to be vulnerable and unreliable. Polarization of the society and expanding inequality driven by liberalization of trade cannot be ignored. Being and doing based on the enjoyment of freedom as the two wings of capability is still relatively far away from making the country an ideal model for development. However, although there are still some turbulences on the way of achieving a consolidated development, this reality cannot be ignored that the country could rescue its economy from underdevelopment in the fastest conceivable way and even gallop ahead of other developing countries. It is not a rootless optimism. Statistics prove that the decline in extreme poverty in India has not only outpaced most of the developing world, but also the middle- and lower middle-income countries as a group (The Indian Express, 2016). According to the World Bank, India which is home to the largest number of poor people in the world, must be also seen number one in the world in liberating people from extreme poverty (The World Bank, 2016).

What has not been explored in evaluation of the relative success in development of the country is the innovation of an alternative harmonizing traditional spiritual life with economic needs in a multicultural context inspired and inherited by *Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi* (1869–1948). While September the 11th is nowadays remembered as the date when terrorists attacked the United States, it was Gandhi who earlier in 1906 on the same date gave birth to the non-violence movement against racial discrimination in South Africa, called *Satyagraha* (Rowell, 2009: pp. 26–27). For his pacifist social activism and campaigns for political and economic independence of India, Gandhi came to be known as India's 'Father of the Nation'. His eloquent speeches for independence and the embracing of an ascetic lifestyle based on meditation, fasting, and prayer, built the highest level of reverence for Gandhi. Indeed, his thoughts and plans for independence of the country, which reflects one of the deepest spiritual drivers in Indian cultural life, merited him to be known as *Mahatma Gandhi* (whereas *Mahatma* in Sanskrit means the 'Great-Souled-One'). The Great-Souled-One could turn the independence movement successfully into a massive organization of India's capacity for its unique economic development. Interesting in his plan for creation of a politically and economically independent country, was his hunger-strike initiative to protest and challenge the treatment of the poor classes, the so-called untouchables. In defence of the poor's fundamental rights, he renamed the poor people *Harijans* (children of God). His effectively

prospering initiative in support of the poor created an uproar among his followers, which resulted in reforms in Indian social structure.

I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability, or the curse of the intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men (Gandhi, 2008, p. 31).

A closer look at Gandhi's leadership for independence and economic development of the country, reveals inspiring elements that are fundamental in a good and just development model, perhaps for developing countries today. Non-violent disobedience against racial discrimination as well as against foreign intervention and dictations, creating of a normative space for effective mass participation in the process of decision making in the country, according a high degree of importance to harmony, favoring deep equality notably in addressing and curing gender-related issues, emphasizing people's basic needs *as means for a higher goal*, education for development and a humanistic and egalitarian social order, are the leading inspiration from his *India of My Dreams*. There is an enormous potential in this dream to be modeled as an ideal society for developing countries built in accordance with their own original and genuine development.



This model for independence and prosperity of the nation, aspired justice read and rooted in *Bhagavad-Gita*. Indeed, Gandhi's passion for non-violent leadership of the country towards prosperity sprung from his understanding of Hindu's spiritual culture urging freedom from injustice to build an independently developed country. Interesting in this development is the influential presence of social development geared towards an inclusionary nation-making. Therefore, the entire history of struggle for independence began from 1857, and its unique spiritual background must be considered in development of the country. Central in

this background picture is the interplay of multiple ideologies from communism to socialism to Gandhi's model of self-sufficiency and cottage industries development. The central question addressed in this book is: *How did India fared better than other developing countries and to what extent can other countries take inspiration from this model and rebuild their own countries based on their national resources, cultural heritage, and the capacity to interact globally?* To answer this question, Gandhi's *India of My Dreams* has been taken as a source of inspiration. India's alternative road to development could potentially define a model for genuine development based on rediscovery of innate spiritual connection of every person to nature and community.

The book is divided in two parts for a thematic order. The first part, which contains five chapters, could be of interest to those who wish to understand Gandhian thought and its relevance for the development of modern India. Those with an interest in Indian philosophy, religion and spirituality, may read the first two chapters, which deal with *Vivekananda* (1863–1902), who was an important source of inspiration for Gandhi, as the vital way in bridging Indian morality and the modern economics needs of India (chapter one) and the perceptions of Islam and Muslims by a Hindu mystic who also was an associate of Gandhi, *Thanwardas Lilaram Vaswani* (1879–1966) (chapter two). Other topics addressed in this section are: a Gandhian-inspired perspective on entrepreneurship in conjunction with social responsibility (chapter three), Gandhi's inspiration for equality of men and women, how this inspiration has come through, and what implications could this have on rural life in India (chapter four) and the dream of the Indian public intellectual *Rajni Kothari* (1928–2015), who wanted to see the emergence of an ideal-type postcolonial state whose cosmopolitan outlook would serve as an alternate model to hegemonic domestic and international politics. Kothari's idea of India was very much in line with the aspirations of the leaders of India's nationalist movement for independence (chapter five).

The second part of the book deals with the social, political and economic development in India today. This section covers seven chapters, including a chapter on the relevance of the Gandhian concepts *Satyagraha* and *Social Justice*. This study strives to provide an explanation about the background of social justice in India and make a threadbare explanation on how the quota system is thriving in the country (chapter six). Other topics addressed in this section are: a study of the various aspects of industrialization in post-colonial India as well as the exploration of the emergence of the informal sector as major outsourcing agent for formal

sector and comments on rapid labour reforms in favour of the capitalist class and the resultant deterioration in economic condition of industrial workers (chapter seven), human capital fostering service industry as an element in economic growth (chapter eight), *Behrupiya* on the stages of global capitalism (chapter nine), India as an emerging medical tourism attraction (chapter ten), India's giant Tata Group Industry as an example of the success in economic and trade industry (chapter eleven) and the emergence of 'New Women' in urban India with a focus on the changes in buying roles and media portrayal in the wake of globalization (chapter twelve).

We have been honoured to invite authors coming from various academic disciplines (such as, economics, political science, philosophy and theology and religious studies) and institutions (universities and technical institutes), which makes this volume a unique multi- and interdisciplinary project.

We would like to thank all the contributors to this work for their dedication and professionalism. Also, we would to thank the publisher for the supportive cooperation and patience in the production of this book.

This book will be of special interest to university students and academics in the areas of development studies, economics, political science, philosophy, religious studies and spirituality. Furthermore, the book will also be interesting for general readers with an interest in the development of modern India.

References

- Gandhi, M. (2008). *India of My Dreams*. Delhi: Rajpal & Sons.
- Government of India, Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs, Economic Reforms: Two Years after and the Task Ahead, Discussion Paper, New Delhi, July 1993.
- Kapila, U. (1994). *Indian Economy Since Independence, Volume 5*. New Delhi, India, Academic Foundation.
- Rowell, J.L. (2009). Gandhi and Bin Laden: Religion at the Extremes, Lanham, Md.: University Press of America.
- Is India Really the World's Most Attractive Economy for Investors? (2015). *BNY Mellon*.
- Ruhl, O. and Revenga, A. (2016). "Five Key Drivers of Reducing Poverty in India." *The Indian Express*.
- The World Bank. (2016). Pathways to Prosperity: An e-Symposium.

PART I:

GANDHIAN THOUGHT AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN INDIA

CHAPTER ONE

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA— BRIDGING INDIAN MORALITY: MODERN ECONOMIC NEEDS OF INDIA

MONICA PRABHAKAR
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI, INDIA

Executive Summary

This study deals with *Vivekananda* (also known as *Swami Vivekananda*, 1863–1902) and his philosophical ethical thought, which is still relevant for modern India. Vivekananda's concept of 'morality' is embedded in his spiritual humanism. Moksha plays a key role in his worldview. However, Vivekananda's spiritual humanism promotes a spiritual egalitarianism. Each person has a soul and no one's soul is superior to anyone else's. Each seeks liberation or moksha. With economic and political realities as they are, not everyone has the equal opportunity to seek moksha as those who are oppressed are unable to find the time and concentration that is required to resolutely gear one's life towards moksha. Vivekananda thereby contends that social justice should be a primary aim of an individual qua society. Hence individual ethics is intertwined with social ethics. The link is provided by Vivekananda's definition of morality in terms of selflessness. The selflessness at the individual level is attained by transcending one's own soul and realizing that every other soul is one with one's own soul. For Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) and the existentialists morality is an end in itself arising out of free will; whereas for Vivekananda, morality is a means to liberation. Moksha then has primacy over the ethical. With the important link between the individual and the social established, Vivekananda can go on to push individuals to work towards establishing economic equality as an ethical goal. What we understand as sustained development on the social level, is, for Vivekananda, a moral outcome of selflessness. Both selflessness and sustained economic development are means for liberation.

Keywords: Spiritual humanism, moksha (liberation), selflessness, ethics, social justice, spiritual egalitarianism

Introduction

There was not much personal interaction between *Vivekananda* (also known as *Swami Vivekananda*, 1863–1902) and *Mahatma Gandhi* (1869–1948). Vivekananda died at an early age of 39 and Gandhi became central to the Indian freedom struggle after 1908 when he wrote *Hind Swaraj*. Had Vivekananda lived a full life, the India of ‘our’ dreams could well refer to the Gandhi’s and Vivekananda’s dream vision of India of the future.

Gandhi’s respect for Vivekananda was unequivocal. In 1921 he went to Belur Math to pay his respect to him and said: “I have gone through his works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand-fold (Balslev 2014, p. xi).” 21 years later in 1941, in a letter to S. Avinashilingam, Gandhi wrote about Vivekananda: “Surely Swami Vivekanand’s writings need no introduction from anybody. They make their own irresistible appeal (Swamivivekanandaquotes.org 2013a).” Hence, Vivekananda’s perspective is an integral part of Gandhi’s India of his dreams.

Vivekananda and Gandhi shared their concern for the upliftment of the poor and general social justice that was free of caste discrimination. Mahesh and Thakur (2015) state: “Swami Vivekananda [is] amongst the prominent social reformers who raised their voice to *provide social justice to Dalits and the weaker section*. Social reformists always tried to convey the message that the fundamental teachings of all religions were based on principles of love, compassion, equality, justice, truth, kindness (*emphasis added*) (p. 106).” And for Gandhi they write: “Gandhi ji made significant efforts to attain the key elements for social justice, namely, freedom, equality and brotherhood and to an extent also achieved success in his efforts (p.106).” The common ground of upliftment of the poor and social justice in both Gandhi and Vivekananda sets the agenda for an economically just society keeping in mind the economic needs of today in the India of their dreams.

Subhash Chandra Bose (1897–1945?), one of India’s most admired Freedom Fighters, wrote about Vivekananda with the highest adulations:

“With him (Swami Vivekananda) religion was the inspirer of nationalism. He tried to infuse into the new generation a sense of pride in India’s past, of faith in India’s future and a spirit of selfconfidence and self-respect. [...] Swami Vivekananda may be regarded as the spiritual father of the modern nationalist movement. [...] Reckless in his sacrifice, unceasing in his activity, boundless in his love, profound and versatile in his wisdom, exuberant in his emotions, merciless in his attacks but yet simple as a child [...] He was consequently a worshipper of *Sakti* and gave a practical interpretation to the Vedanta for the uplift of his countrymen [...] He was [...] a yogi of the highest spiritual level [...] who had [...] consecrated his whole life to the moral and spiritual uplift of his nation and of humanity [...] The present freedom movement owes its origin to Swamiji’s message. [...] Swami Vivekananda, on the one hand, called man to be real man freed from all fetters, and on the other, laid the foundation for true nationalism in India by preaching the gospel of the harmony of all religions (*emphasis added*) (Swamivivekanandaquotes.org 2013b).”

Gandhi’s subtle statement that reading Vivekananda made his nationalism increase a thousand-fold is made abundantly explicit by Subhash Chandra Bose in his superlative assessment of Vivekananda.

The theme of my article is extracted by gathering the italicized phrases from the above quotations. Mahesh and Thakur state that Vivekananda as a social reformer raised his voice “*to provide social justice to Dalits and the weaker section*”. Subhash Chandra Bose states that Vivekananda “*gave a practical interpretation of the Vedanta for the uplift of his countrymen;*” and devoted his life to the “*moral and spiritual upliftment of his nation and of humanity*”. The addition of ‘*humanity*’ by Bose is not to be taken lightly. Vivekananda is often misunderstood as a Hindu chauvinist. But he invokes the Indian tradition from ancient times as that of a universal spiritual humanism. Spiritual humanism is based on the egalitarianism of all humans in the sense that each human has a soul with no soul being higher or lower than any other soul. And this is true not only of Indians but of all of humanity. Hence, to be truly Indian or truly ‘Hindu’ one must be truly a humanist of all humankind. Acceptance and tolerance of all religions is also a corollary of this. Hence, to be ‘Hindu’ in this sense is also to accept all religions.

The term ‘Indian morality’ in the title of my paper within the context of Vivekananda is really human morality. It is human morality because to be Indian is to be truly human. The Indian context comes in when we turn to the present economic needs of India. The challenge is how to attain economic progress for the nation as a whole while constrained to the moral

dimension of social justice and upliftment of all and not just some or most Indians.

For Vivekananda, acceptance of all religions is not sufficient. Rather, we must embrace all religions, we must study them and find the unifying principle in all of them. For Gandhi, this can be achieved by staying devoted and faithful in one's own religion. Vivekananda explains this in the following way:

“The unity of religions is based on direct perception of ultimate reality. The paths are different but the goal remains the same. Even if the whole world becomes converted to one religion or another, it will not enhance the cause of unity. Unity in diversity is the plan of the universe. Unity of religions calls for our paying attention to the basic teachings of all faiths, which provide us with the common ground where we are all rooted. Our scientific age is forcing us to find this common unity. Either we remain in our individual religious ghettos or we accept the fact of the innate spiritual unity of all faiths (Adhiswarananda, 2006).”

Vivekananda does not deny that one could reach this through one's own religion and thus his approach could be regarded as 'pluralistic'.

Let me restate the last sentence: “Either we remain in our little religious ghettos or we accept the fact of the innate spiritual unity of all faiths.” This is a clear indication that Vivekananda's spiritualism should not be regarded as 'Hindu spiritualism' as that would be ghettoizing it. Nor, should it be regarded as 'religious humanism' with the somewhat negative connotation to 'religion' given by him here. Hence, 'spiritual humanism' might be the proper characterization of Vivekananda's thought.

Vivekananda's Morality: Bridging the Individual and the Social Ethics

In the history of Western ethics, as we know from *Aristotle* (384–322 B.C.), ethics can be divided into individual and social. Thereby Aristotle wrote the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a tract of individual ethics in which the final goal of each person is to seek *eudaimonia* (happiness). Aristotle also wrote the *Politics* in which the final goal is justice. These two-seminal works of Aristotle have been inspirational for the development of individual ethics and social ethics over the centuries. The formal discipline of ethics has focussed more on agent centred individual ethics even though Aristotle was equally concerned with social ethics as well. In the history of Indian philosophy as well individual ethics seemed to have dominated

over social ethics. However, Indian ethics is principally in the context of individuals seeking *moksha* as the final end of life, which is actually only achieved after the cycle of rebirths. Though *moksha* itself is transcendental and non-individual, those seeking *moksha* are nominalized embodied individuals. Though all individuals must seek *moksha* as their aim there is no explicit notion of a collective *moksha* sought by society as a whole.

Vivekananda is very much in the Indian tradition, an *Advaitin*, and *moksha* has a key role in his world view as well. However, Vivekananda's spiritual humanism promotes a spiritual egalitarianism. Each individual person has a soul and no one's soul is superior to anyone else's. Each embodied person, then, through his/her soul seeks liberation or *moksha*. However, with economic and political realities as they were in Vivekananda's time, and continue to be the same more or less today, not everyone has the equal opportunity to seek *moksha* as many are oppressed, their very dignity as humans is denied, and they are unable to find the time and concentration that is required to resolutely gear one's life towards *moksha*. Hence, Vivekananda is very much aware, like other social reformers in India in his time, that bringing about social justice should be our aim as citizens. Though social justice is not the final aim of an individual, it is a primary aim of an individual *qua* society or community.

An individual can seek *moksha* for himself/herself even in a society which does not have social justice. However, Vivekananda's spiritual humanism has the egalitarianism of souls as a necessary condition. Hence, seeking individual *moksha* without simultaneously working towards attaining social justice is incomplete. This is how Vivekananda links individual ethics to social ethics. This aspect of Vivekananda has been somewhat overlooked. Part of the purpose of this study is to emphasize this link which is important not only for Vivekananda but for ethics in general.

In the history of Western ethics, the link between individual and social ethics has been somewhat severed since *Plato* (428/7–346/8 B.C.) and *Aristotle* and the two have developed along parallel lines. In recent times, there has been sometimes an adverse relation between the two. Marxism shifts the centeredness in ethics from individuals to society where the overall welfare and progress of society is the aim towards which all individuals must work instead of working towards their own individual happiness or *moksha*. Individual ethics hence has to be abandoned in order to bring about an egalitarian and just society. Marxism is often criticized for suppressing individual freedom in order to achieve some social goals which may not be achievable. Further, it does seem to many, like it did to

Aristotle, that each individual is, by nature, geared towards seeking his/her own happiness. To suspend this for the betterment of society seems to be an unnatural tendency.

Vivekananda was aware of this tension as I will display in this section. However, he did not believe that individual freedom and social justice are adversaries. Rather, the two can and must be reconciled. Whereas social justice is more or less an end in itself for Marxism, for Vivekananda, it is the means towards attaining spiritual freedom for everyone so that each individual can realize and pursue *moksha* through his/her soul. But first each must be in a position to realize this and this can only be completely achieved once social justice is achieved. Hence, each of us should work towards social justice. There is hence a socialism in Vivekananda, even though not of the Marxist kind.

I turn now to the writings of Vivekananda to weave a path for an understanding of his thought on and the relationship between the individual and the social ethics.

The predominant use of ‘morality’ Vivekananda acknowledges as one that is centred in an individual. In a lecture, ‘The Powers of Mind’, delivered in Los Angeles, California in 1900, Vivekananda stated:

“That is why purity and morality have been always the object of religion; a pure, moral man has control of himself. And all minds are the same, different parts of one Mind. He who knows one lump of clay has known all the clay in the universe. He who knows and controls his own mind knows the secret of every mind and his power over every mind (CW, p. 38).”¹

In Western ethics, ever since *Friedrich Nietzsche* (1844–1900), there had been a tension between religious ethics and individual ethics. Nietzsche called religious ethics a slave morality. Vivekananda was aware of this tension and he wanted to make ethics and ‘morality’, in its classical use as that which has to do with human freedom and action, as the core of religion. This is why he begins the quotation by saying that morality has always been the object of religion. He immediately follows this up by

¹ All citations from Vivekananda’s Collected Works are by page numbers of the online edition, without citation of volume number and page number. Also, in the citations I use the abbreviation CW for ‘Vivekananda 1907’ which is listed in the references. All of this is for ease of citing as this online edition is easily available at <http://studantedavedanta.net/Complete%20Works%20of%20Swami%20Vivekananda.pdf>

defining a ‘moral man’ as one who has control of himself. Hence, the morality he is talking about is not the slave morality of one who follows religion blindly, that which Nietzsche criticizes, but the morality more of Nietzsche’s superman, who has control over himself. One’s control of one’s own mind becomes an exemplary for all minds because all minds are like my mind. Hence, Vivekananda’s concept of morality here has a greater affinity to existentialist ethics of Nietzsche and *Jean-Paul Sartre* (1905–1980) than to religious ethics.

The affinity to existential ethics and the notion of freedom can be seen: “Why should men be moral? Because through morality is the path towards freedom, and immorality leads to bondage (CW, p. 569).” The difference is that Vivekananda accepts a universal soul, an instantiation of which is in each individual.

Vivekananda differs from both Aristotle and the existentialists in that whereas morality is an end in itself arising from freedom of the will for them; for Vivekananda, it is a means to liberation or freedom: “Morality of course is not the goal of man, but the means through which this freedom is attained (p. 1355).” So, whereas individual freedom has the primacy in existentialism, *moksha* has the primacy in Vivekananda. Whereas existentialists like Nietzsche and Sartre break away from their traditions and invert the fundamental primacy, Vivekananda, on the other hand, sustains tradition.

For Aristotle, the ethical has primacy as *eudaimonia* is sought by everyone by nature. For Existentialism, the ethical has primacy because everyone is free and chooses his/her own morality by his/her actions. For Vivekananda, freedom has primacy and the ethical is posterior to this freedom. Freedom, for Vivekananda, is not the existential freedom *simpliciter* but spiritual freedom, the pursuit of *moksha*. *Moksha* then has primacy over the ethical. For Vivekananda, ethical action is done as a means to *moksha*, that is, to attain freedom or liberation. In contrast, for existentialism ethical action is done because one has freedom to choose and perform it.

For Vivekananda as a spiritual humanist, freedom is not the precondition for ethical action as it is for existentialism. Rather, ethical action is the means to attain freedom as liberation in the sense of *moksha*: “Now this morality is only possible if there be a liberty to be attained by man (p. 2041).” There is hence a causal primacy of liberation over morality: “Only freedom can produce true morality. If there were only an endless chain of

cause and effect, Nirvana could not be. It is extinction of the seeming self, bound by this chain. That is what constitutes freedom, to get beyond causality (p. 2359)."

Vivekananda grounds this in the metaphysics of the Vedanta: "Morality is the struggle of the bound will to get free and is the proof that we have come from perfection... (p.1848)." And we must thereby pursue *moksha* as a liberation from the cycle of rebirth to regain the perfection. All of this is centred in the soul in our embodied selves:

"The evolution of nature is the manifestation of the soul. Its expression is modified by the body. This unity of the soul, this common substance of humanity, is the basis of ethics and morality. In this sense all are one, and to hurt one's brother is to hurt one's Self (p. 2091)."

'Religion' for Vivekananda does not mean following the edicts of scriptures or living through ritualistic routines. Religion for him means the gaining of spiritual freedom. And this is to be achieved by each individual on his or her own. This is why religion has the affinity to morality in its traditional ethical sense as just discussed: "Morality and spirituality are the things we strive for (p. 117)." For Vivekananda morality and spirituality are not based on religion but religion is founded on them: "All religion is based on morality, and personal purity is to be counted superior to Dharma (p. 863)." If we take 'personal purity' to mean spirituality and 'dharma' to be religious acts, then the foundational primacy of morality as well as spirituality is established over religion. Once morality is established as foundational for individuals, the link can also be made to its being foundational for society: "Is not morality the foundation of society (p. 1026)?"

'Morality', for Vivekananda, is not something predefined and passed down to us through religious authorities. Rather, it evolves, and this evolution is internalized by our life experiences and introspection:

"[...] as knowledge comes, man grows, morality is evolved and the idea of non-separateness begins. Whether men understand it or not, they are impelled by that power behind to become unselfish. That is the foundation of all morality. It is the quintessence of ethics, preached in any language, or in any religion, or by any prophet in the world. Be thou unselfish [...]" (p. 197)."

This is a quintessential passage in which we see clearly Vivekananda's bridging of individual ethics and social ethics. The concept of morality promoted here is one which gives primacy to the social over the individual

as Vivekananda goes on to say “‘Not ‘I’, but ‘thou’ — that is the background of all ethical codes (p. 197).” Nonetheless, this unselfishness is something that has to be realized by the individual in her/his introspective and experiential journey in life as announced in the opening of the quotation “as knowledge comes, man grows...”

Vivekananda is persistent throughout the corpus of his works on selflessness as the core of ethics: “The gist of morality is sacrifice (p. 1537).” Selflessness and sacrifice are the foundation of morality: “It (self-abnegation) is the basis of all morality; you may extend it to men, or animals, or angels, it is the one basic idea, the one fundamental principle running through all ethical systems (p. 356).” This is the perfect link between individual ethics and social ethics. Selflessness is the fundamental requirement for all ethics. It is no doubt fundamental to social ethics because without selflessness no one would work for the betterment of society but only for the betterment of himself/herself. It is fundamental to individual ethics because it comes as a realization within the evolution of an individual. For Vivekananda, this is within the context of a spiritual evolution of coming to realize oneself as the instantiation of the universal soul and thereby having a solidarity of souls, so to speak, with all other souls and hence all other persons.

The selflessness at the individual level is the transcending of one’s own soul to the universal soul and thereby of the realization of every other soul with one’s own soul. Furthermore, Vivekananda makes a clear non-anthropocentric statement here that is compatible with our present eco-centric ethics. The ethical principle of selflessness is extended to all life, perhaps to the entire ecosystem. Our unselfishness is not only to allow us to serve other humans but also to serve non-human animals and the ecosystem as well.

Vivekananda emphatically makes unselfishness the defining feature of morality: “[...] the only definition that can be given of morality is this: *That which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral* (p. 365).” Vivekananda, however, never waivers from the centrality of agent centeredness in ethics. It is after all the individual who comes to realize this definition and thereby becomes unselfish in order to become moral.

This is somewhat of a negative definition of morality as it requires us to give up selfishness in order to become moral. This is complemented by a positive definition by Vivekananda: “[...] out of this comes the basis of morality. Do not injure another. Love everyone as your own self, because

the whole universe is one (p. 469).” Both self-abnegation as the negative principle and universal love as the positive principle are the Advaita inspirations for Vivekananda and the essence of his spiritual humanism. Vivekananda invokes the Vedantic universal oneness: “[...] it has been the expression of that infinite oneness in human nature; and all that we call ethics and morality and doing good to others is also but the manifestation of this oneness (p. 478).” Again, it is the realization of the oneness in the individual that is the link from the individual to others, to society at large as a composite of other humans as well as other beings on the planet.

For Vivekananda, selflessness and love of all as the two sides of the coin of morality are the crux of Vedantic ethics which is grounded in spiritual oneness: “This is the gist of Vedantic morality — this sameness for all (p. 493).” This is also the foundation of Vivekananda’s spiritual humanism. Hence, we see how Vivekananda’s concept of morality blends with his spiritual humanism.

With the important link between the individual and the social established, Vivekananda can go on to drive individuals to work towards establishing economic equality as an ethical goal: “The enjoyment of advantage over another is privilege, and throughout ages, the aim of morality has been its destruction (p. 497).” We have Jesus Christ as a prime example of this. This is again linked to Vivekananda’s spiritual humanism. When we realize that all souls are equal and have the equal freedom for their realization as part of the same one universal soul, then it is an ethical goal to destroy inequalities caused by greed and privilege. Hence, Vivekananda quotes from the *Bhagavadgita*: “‘Whenever virtue subsides, and immorality abounds, I take human form. In every age I come for the salvation of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, for the establishment of spirituality (*Gita*, IV, 7–8)’ (CW, p. 516).” So, whether it is Krishna or Christ, they come to establish morality and spirituality. Vivekananda continuously equivocates ‘morality’ with ‘spirituality’ not because he is being careless but precisely because he intends to do that.

Vivekananda’s concept of morality is the same continuum as his concept of spiritual humanism. Here is another instance of the purposeful equivocation: “[...] therein lies the explanation of all ethics, of all morality and all spirituality in the universe. Why is it that everyone says, “Do good to others?” [...] Because [...] (of) the eternal light of the Self-denying all manifoldness and asserting that the whole universe is but one (p. 609).” Morality and spirituality hence coincide in the principle of the oneness of the universal soul of which each individual soul is an instantiation.

Vivekananda's spiritual humanism establishes the link between the individual and the social. Every individual has a soul that is an instantiation of the universal soul. Hence, every individual is necessarily linked to every other individual so that the welfare of each individual is the same as the welfare of oneself. This is summed up synoptically: "The infinite oneness of the Soul is the eternal sanction of morality (p. 798)." It is also stated more explicitly:

"But a morality an ethical code, derived from religion and spirituality, has the whole of infinite man for its scope. It takes up the individual, but its relations are to the Infinite, and it takes up society also — because society is nothing, but numbers of these individuals grouped together; and as it applies to the individual and *his* eternal relations, it must necessarily apply to the whole of society, in whatever condition it may be at any given time. Thus, we see that there is always the necessity of spiritual religion for mankind (p. 536)."

Rather than separating religious ethics from individual ethics as the existentialists do, Vivekananda presents a much broader scope of religious ethics which encompasses individual ethics as well. Defenders of religious ethics hence need to take a close look at Vivekananda's spiritual humanism, which is the foundation of his religious ethics. Traditional ethicists will also be happy as the primacy of agent centeredness and of individual ethics is not given up.

'Society' is defined as a collection of individuals, which means we begin with individuals as agents and only then can we talk about collective ethics. Vivekananda differs here from Marxist ethics in which the primacy is of the collective over the individual. Nonetheless, there is a similar aim for the betterment of society since a collection of individuals is a collection of souls like my own soul and all are instantiations of the same universal soul, so that what is good for all is also good for me. Hence, there is a reconciliation of Vivekananda's spiritual humanist ethics and Marxian ethics despite differing foundations for the two ethics.

Vivekananda's conception of 'morality' can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Morality or ethical action is a *means* to attain liberation.
- (2) Moral action is centred in an individual who must choose to perform action.
- (3) Morality is defined in terms of selflessness or self-sacrifice.
- (4) Renunciation is necessary for morality as practical action.

The sequence of (1) through (4) constitutes the theorem that provides the necessary link from individual ethics to social in Vivekananda. Hence, individual ethics is not an adversary of social ethics and we need not decide which has primacy over the other. Rather, the two are inseparable. We begin with individual ethics, but we end up with social ethics. Hence, equality and social justice in society is not only the need for creating a harmonious society but it is the essence of morality that is required for each individual. And as (1) tells us morality is the means for liberation. What is not explicitly stated but is implicit throughout the works of Vivekananda is that it is the required means, at least for ordinary people, for liberation. This is not explicitly stated because Vivekananda comes from a tradition in which there are rishis and enlightened souls who sit in Samadhi for ages, removed from ordinary life, and thereby from morality. So, it cannot be said that morality is the only means to *moksha* or liberation, but for ordinary people living a day to day life, which is almost all of us, it is indeed the only means to liberation. In our day to day lives we are first and foremost governed by fundamental constraints which can be clubbed together as economic constraints. We now turn to Vivekananda's notion of 'economics' and economic constraints and how this can set the groundwork for a Vivekananda inspired conception of morality that can be the foundation for India today with its modern economic needs.

Vivekananda's Morality and the Economic Needs of Modern India

The easy task is finished. Though section 3 required extensive work extracting the quotations from Vivekananda it was a relatively simple task thanks to the great efforts made by those who have put together the *Complete Works of Vivekananda* and also thanks to the clarity of Vivekananda's works. The relatively harder task is now upon us to use Vivekananda's concept of morality as developed in section 3 as the framework on which to build a model of development for India with its modern economic needs. This task is made especially difficult because Vivekananda died in 1902, that is, 45 years before India's independence and 116 years before the writing of this article.

At the turn from the 18th to the 19th century, the industrial revolution was full blown in Germany, England and the United States. *Karl Marx* (1818–1883) and *Friedrich Engels* (1820–1895) had written *Das Kapital*, predicting a workers' revolution all over the world that would lead to the dictatorship of the proletariat. They saw all liberation struggles, including

the Indian freedom struggle which began in 1857, as a struggle that will eventually end up in a socialist revolution and the overthrow of the owning class, transferring ownership of all means of production to workers and to the community as a whole. The German Revolution of 1848, with Marx and Engels participating in it, did not succeed. The Russian revolution was still 17 years down the road. Surely, Vivekananda must have been familiar with the German Revolution but does not mention it in his works. Luckily, he does talk about socialism and communism in some places though with very different meanings than what we commonly associate with them with their ideological connotations. Nonetheless these quotations will take us towards our objective of finding the future of India of our dreams with its modern economic needs based on Vivekananda's morality and perspective of a prosperous nation.

Let us begin with Vivekananda's concept of 'economics'. Surely, Vivekananda was neither *Adam Smith* (1723–1790) nor Marx nor *John Maynard Keynes* (1883–1946). Nor was he even Gandhi, who had some well worked out economic thought that he conveyed through his writings. Vivekananda used the term 'economics' broadly in a common-sense manner, as we may commonly use to refer to it, as the financial constraints under which we all live our lives. Let us remember that Vivekananda's main mission was religion, not the preaching of religion but living a religious life in the sense of his 'spiritual humanism'. This religious life was guided by the final aim of liberation and morality became a means to attain this end as we have thoroughly discussed in section 3. It is in the context of and relation to religion and spiritual freedom that we must place economics:

"There [runs] an economic struggle through every religious struggle. This animal called man has some religious influence, but he is guided by economy. Individuals are guided by something else, but the mass of mankind never made a move unless economy was [involved]. You may [preach a religion that may not be perfect in every detail], but if there is an economic background [to it], and you have the most [ardent champions] to preach it, you can convince a whole country... (p. 504)."

We know how dominant economics is today. 'Infrastructure' and 'development' are key economic buzz words we hear a hundred times a day. The news channels are full of news about economics including the stock market, interest rates, and so on. Each year in India when the annual budget is declared, all are glued to the television and then to the newspapers the next day to figure out how they have to plan out their

finances for next year. Even for the most spiritually inclined people today, the overwhelming dominance of economy cannot be denied.

Vivekananda, as we see in the quotation, was quite aware of this dominance of economy. Furthermore, Vivekananda provides a prescription for any religion of the future, the future being our present in 2018. Religion which does not take economics, the present economic conditions, the infrastructure, economic development and progress, etc. seriously; will not be a successful religion. It will not carry the mass of people. Christ was against profit and at the time when traders were making excessive profits he was justified and could convince the masses of this as well. Capitalism brought great exploitation of labourers in order to produce profits for the factory owners. This led to strikes and revolutions. Oppression still exists and there are ideological stances that call for a world-wide revolution and a change of the world market economic system to a socialist one. However, in the present circumstances this does not seem to be feasible and such an ideology or a religion that would adopt such an ideology would not practically gain much support. Hence, the religion of today must somehow accept the prevailing corporate world market system with the stock markets around the world. Yet, it can ask for reform to bring about a socially just society geared towards reduction of poverty and sustained development.

Vivekananda's spiritual humanism and the morality adopted as a means for liberation allows the flexibility of fitting into the present world economic system and charting out a plan for an economic progress for India which would also accommodate an egalitarianism in which everyone is minimally self-sufficient and has equal opportunity to pursue their goals of financial independence and flourishing. In the Indian context this also requires the change of a mind-set of the caste system and discriminations based on caste. Vivekananda was a reformist. He accepted the origin of castes in ancient India as a necessary economic division of labour at the time. However, the caste system got corrupted and was maintained by religious authorities in the name of religion which was a mistake: "Social laws were created by economic conditions under the sanction of religion. The terrible mistake of religion was to interfere in social matters (p. 1074)."

Vivekananda was clearly not a supporter of the caste system as it existed in his time around 1900. He went as far as to ask for the abolishment of it: "He (Vivekananda) said that to establish caste one must change the social conditions completely and destroy the entire economic system of the

country (p. 76).” Conditions have changed quite a bit in the past century, but some feel that we perhaps still need to do what Vivekananda has called for. The growth of the corporate and service sectors in India has eliminated the caste system to a great extent. Affirmative action implemented through the Indian constitution has brought about greater educational and employment opportunities for the lower castes. More reform still is required but the central focus of sustained economic growth of India of our dreams need not be on the elimination of the caste system which may be withering away as India progresses. We need to make sure that our progress is geared in a manner that it does wither away.

Vivekananda’s thought on the terms ‘nationalism’ and ‘patriotism’ is also still relevant. He warns us for the dangers of these concepts:

“We must go far beyond sentiment when we want to judge. We know that it is not emotion alone that governs the world, but there is something behind emotion. Economic causes, surrounding circumstances and other conditions enter into the development of nations.”

“So in this world, as each nation is placed under peculiar circumstances and is developing its own type, the day is coming when all these different types will be mixed up — when that vile sort of patriotism which means “rob everybody and give to me” will vanish. Then there will be no more one-sided development in the whole world, and each one of these [nations] will see that they have done right (p. 2605).”

In the first citation, Vivekananda warns us that we must not be obsessed with nationalism as an emotional feature. We forget that we live today in an economically interdependent world. Though Gandhi called for self-sufficiency, the way the world is economically intertwined today with multinationals and BPOs that complete self-sufficiency may not be possible for any nation and so not for India as well. While the European Union becomes economically strong, we must also work towards our alliances such as BRICS to become economically strong in order to enhance our own economic progress. We must also overcome strong nationalist feelings that may lead us to consider our neighbour as our enemy and work towards a strong South Asian economic alliance which again will be for the benefit of our economic growth.

In the second citation, Vivekananda argues that colonialism will end. And literally colonialism has ended as all the nations have become independent and no longer colonized by European nations. But another type of colonialism has emerged, that in which the North remains relatively rich