



From the Cover page to the Body Text: Embedding Gandhi in Economics, Governance and Management Education

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ABSTRACT

Given the prevalent political, social and economic predicaments and disruptions in the world, Gandhi represents an idea that is much more relevant today than ever. The paper argues that merely placing Gandhian *talisman* on the cover of the textbooks published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) would not suffice. It argues that like the theme of a story, Gandhian philosophy and practices must reverberate throughout the scholastic journey of our learners. The paper presents some pathways for embedding Gandhi in Economics, Governance and Management Education, that is, EGM education. The paper draws on methodological holism emphasizing the centrality of Gandhian thought in EGM Subject Content Knowledge (SCK) and Methodological Content Knowledge (MCK). It emphasizes experiential and experimental methods such that Gandhi is not reduced to a portrait on the back of a person's chair. Instead, Gandhi engages her or him like a mirror in front that enables a personal makeover into a *Vaishnav Jan* through a transformative process that trains hands, awakens intellect and softens hearts.

Keywords: Gandhian *talisman*, SCK, MCK, *Vaishnav Jan*

Gandhian *talisman* features almost on every text published by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) as does the Preamble of the Constitution of India. Can there be stronger foundation stones of any educational system? Strong foundations, however, do not automatically make great buildings. Like the them a of a story, foundational elements must reverberate throughout the scholastic journey as we engage our learners and ourselves in the transformative process of aspiring, acquiring, internalising and living the values we choose and cherish. Of course, this commitment must also reflect in the educational policy and curriculum frameworks. *Fortunately it is not difficult. Gandhi is the most pragmatic idea-desirable, feasible sustainable. He has to be understood*

not in terms of the message he gave, but the life he lived. He said, "My life is my message."

Purpose of the paper is to develop pathways to embedding Gandhi in the Curriculum, Content, Classroom and Confirmation of Learning in Economics, Governance and Management (EGM). Economics (E) begins in Class IX, Management (M) in Class XII and Governance (G) in Higher Education in most curricula. The pathways developed here are accordingly differentiated and focused.

The paper draws on methodological holism instead of methodological individualism. It seeks

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to foster deep learning instead of surface learning. It emphasizes, for instance, the integrated, triadic nature of economics, governance and management education and the centrality of Gandhian thought therein (Fig. 1).

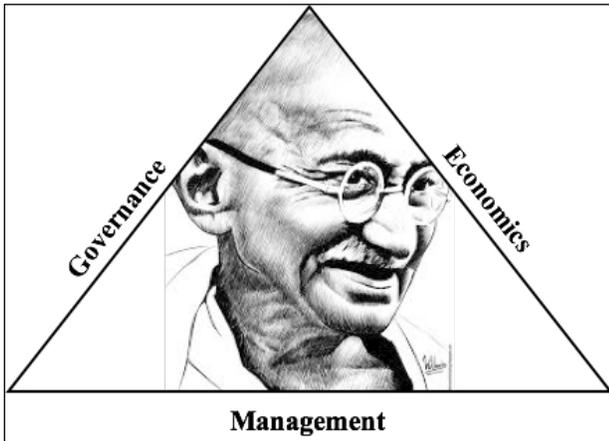


Fig. 1: Gandhi, the Thema in Governance, Economics and Management

The paper rests on behavioural model of decision-making instead of rational model of decision-making thus making it possible to consider seemingly paradoxical propositions in economics, governance and management. For example, the famed paradox of thrift in economics that cannot resolve the contrasting impact of individual and collective savings within rational model can be addressed by taking recourse to behavioural approaches to economic theory.

The rational-behavioural approach differences, to the author, impede Gandhi’s living presence beyond the cover page to the realms of the body text in EGM education. Much of the academic curricula, content and classroom is rationally designed rather than behaviourally anchored. This is despite the professed emphasis on constructivism in pedagogic content knowledge (PCK) and subject content knowledge (SCK).

An important disclaimer would be in order. The author knows Gandhi only intuitively. He is not adequately versed with Gandhi’s literature and literature on Gandhi. The author, however, is a firm believer in the efficacy of his ideas. As an educator

the author believes that any worthy idea needs to be embedded and engendered as a lived experience rather than professed symbolically. The paper’s title draws its legitimacy here and only here.

Background

It began in the year 2008/09 when the author embarked upon content development for University of Delhi for a course on business ethics. The theme figure for the content comprised “Seven Deadly Sins” that Gandhi shunned lest our economy, polity and society should be subject to a path of self-destruction (Fig. 2).

Wealth Without Work
Pleasure Without Conscience
Knowledge Without Character
Commerce (Business) Without Morality (Ethics)
Science Without Humanity
Religion Without Sacrifice
Politics Without Principles

Fig. 2: Pathways to Self-destruction

In 2011 the author floated the idea of Conscientious Commerce emphasizing commerce based on one’s conscience rather than greed. We operationalized the definition of conscientious commerce as “becoming and behaving ethically, socially and environmentally aware, responsible, and, engaged as individuals, consumers, investors, businesspersons, managers and as corporations and society.” The idea, *inter alia* rested on a value system derived from easily discernible Gandhian principles and values (Fig. 3).

Rather than always being a go-getter, reach out and become a go-giver too.
Rather than always being a leader, try and become a good follower too.
Rather than forever aspiring to be a winner, learn to become a good loser too.
Prefer goodness over greatness.
Serve to deserve. First deserve then desire.
Frugal habits; honeybee like consumption.

Fig. 3: Conscientious Commerce Values Framework

Gandhian Concomitants of EGM

As stated at the outset Gandhian *talisman* features on the cover of almost every text published by the NCERT (Fig. 4).

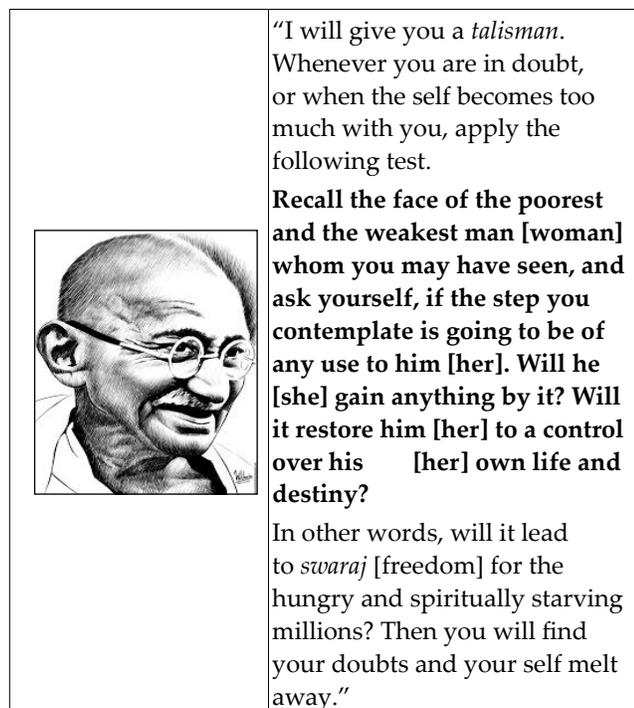


Fig. 4: Gandhi's *Talisman*

To the author, the *talisman* provides an eminently valid and reliable "sample" of Gandhi's educational and life philosophy. Any valid and reliable sample represents the whole. So does the *talisman*. Is / should not the purpose of all education and in fact the life be the expansion of freedom and realization of *swaraj*? Does not it require *inter alia* the transcendence from the self especially when it becomes too much? Should not education and development derive its meaning from the involvement of and impact on the poorest and the weakest? Is not *swaraj*, *ipso facto*, the microcosmic manifestation of the macrocosmic *Ramrajya* the aspirational "State" that liberates its people from physical (*Bhautik*), bodily (*Daihik*) and spiritual (*Daivik*) suffering ("Santap")? Should not any education, therefore, must "equip" the pupils for the necessary wherewithal of the dexterity of hand, enlightening of the intellect, 'head,' and the broadening of the 'heart'? Take any piece of

Gandhi the whole Gandhi gets manifested! Does not he exhort us to breakaway from the obsessed self toward an enlightened self? Does not his educational philosophy imply making of the human into the *vaishnavo jan* who knows the pain of others and does good to others?

What we set forth here is an exemplar of Gandhian concepts in economics, governance and management in the meso context of his educational philosophy and the macro context of his life philosophy (Fig. 5).

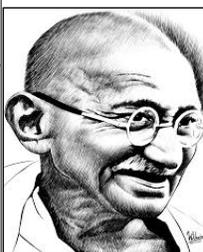
Educational Philosophy		
3Hs- the Qualities of Hand, Head and Heart before, along and as a consequence of development of 3Rs- Reading, wRiting, aRithmetic		
Disciplines		Gandhian Concomitants
Economics		Local and solidarity economy, Dignity of Labour, Sustainable Development, Circular Economy, Equality
Management		Purpose of Business, Producer and Consumer Cooperatives, Grassroot Innovation, Frugal Engineering, Bottom of the Pyramid, Business Ethics, Customer Service
Governance		Shared prosperity, Trusteeship
Life Philosophy		
Practice of Non-violence and Truth		

Fig. 5: EGM- The Gandhian Way

Rather than elaborating each of the concomitant individually, we attempt to develop a common narrative on Gandhian concomitants of EGM Theory & Practice. Many of Gandhi's ideas are offbeat and non-mainstream, yet eminently pragmatic.

In the Gandhian scheme of the things the unit of economic analysis is grassroot, local economy. This represents bottom-up approach to development

in contrast to the top-down trickle down theory of growth. It is pertinent to mention here that we can understand Gandhi better by giving up the narrow, myopic confines of particular disciplines we “specialise” in. Thus, the idea of local economy is intertwined with the idea of local self-governance.

Gandhi favoured production by masses rather than mass production by profit centred corporations / monolithic, fortified “firm”. The implied form is not ‘corporation’ but ‘cooperatives;’ the implied motive is not personal profit but shared prosperity.

Thus a business or a people are the trustees of the resources of the community. These resources are to be utilized frugally; their usufruct is to be allocated justly not among the extant but also the future generations. A business, an economy and a society, therefore comprise sustainability in action.

Gandhian economics emphasizes sustainability. It is about producing more *from* lesser consumption of the resources *for* more including those on the bottom of the economic pyramid *by* employing more! *Swaraj* is not mere a political concept. It is more of a socio-economic philosophy guiding our social contracts and economic exchanges. It is not based on the idea of personal greed but the larger good that can be attained by wider participation and collective action.

Obviously such a conceptualisation of the social and economic reality of a people emphasizes indigenous and native people, resources, markets, technologies and production relations. It emphasizes grassroot innovation and entrepreneurship. It shuns all imperialism- whether political, economic or thought and knowledge imperialism. *Swaraj* indeed.

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has taken up these ideas strongly in terms of their promotion of research on Social & Solidarity Economy (SSE). In popular conception, many of these ideas are still considered subaltern. The mainstream economic, management and governance thought is still besieged with the idea of corporate society. The acknowledgment that alternative, indigenous approaches do exist and can succeed open up the possibility that the subaltern becomes the mainstream (Fig. 6)!



Fig. 6: Can the Non-mainstream be the Mainstream?

The world is gripped in enough of political, social and economic predicaments and disruptions that Gandhi represents an idea that is much more relevant today than it ever was.

Embedding Gandhi in PCK and SCK

As noted earlier too in this paper, embedding Gandhi in EGM necessitates systematic incorporation of his ideas in educational policy, curriculum design, content development, pedagogy of curriculum & content delivery, student and institutional quality assessment and so on. This needs to be done not only in the context of specific disciplines but also in leveraging domain and discipline transcendences (Fig. 7).

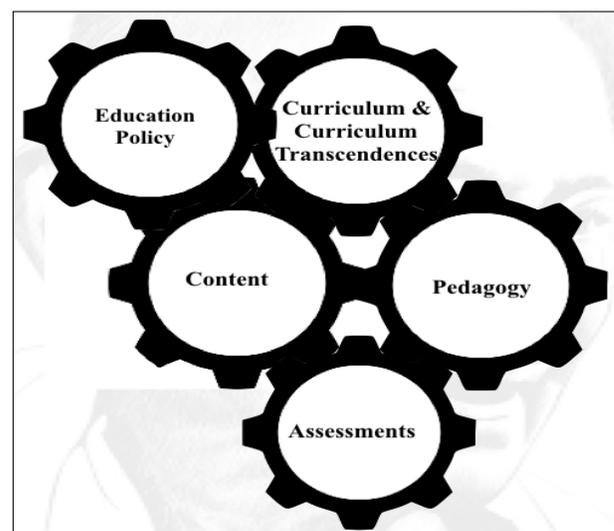


Fig. 7: Contours of Embedding Gandhi in EGM

The Fig. 7 represents ideal methodology for embedding any idea in education. The interlocking wheels imply that the impetus may originate from anywhere, at any level. In the absence of friction it would set in motion the other wheels.

Embedding Gandhi: Experiencing, Experimenting

Embedding Gandhi in EGM necessitates creation of opportunities for experiencing the subaltern and the will to experiment.

Should we measure an economy's worth by the amount of goods & services consumed or the resources conserved or saved? Can we incorporate a discussion on the idea of economy as a cooperative system in the economics curricula? Why should the seller set the price of a product? Can we have a system where the customer pays on the basis of value perceived and the ability to pay? Should not the essence of management lie in making cooperative ventures possible and prosperous? Should not the essence of governance lie in ensuring that the management exactly does that? What if all the economic and business decisions were to be taken keeping the interest of the next worst person in mind rather than the personal best interest? Should not production and consumption utility functions be stated in terms of enhancing social and ecological value rather than economic value alone? In arts, architecture and fashion can being minimalist be more "cool"? Is minimalism a threat to business success? Can marketing thrive on shunning consumerism? And finance on potential and performance of an organization on such "non-financial" parameters as community service and ecological footprint?

Shall we give Gandhi a chance? The opportunities are clear. What are the challenges?

Challenges and Recommendations

Embedding any idea- in educational policy, curriculum, content and transaction thereof in the classroom practices, student and institutional

assessments- in some way becomes a matter of political priorities of the ruling establishment. Greater academic autonomy- to the institutions responsible for framing educational policy, curriculum frameworks and content development; to the teachers for devising and implementing learner engagement strategies- should surely help the cause.

Gandhi is not a portrait on the back of an officer's chair. Gandhi is a mirror in front that enables personal makeover into a *vaishnav jan* so that the educational administrators and educators may continuously engage themselves and their learners in a transformative process that trains hands, awakens intellect and softens hearts.

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