

Global Times

Magazine for a New Social Order

May/June 1998, nr. 3

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Gandhi & Sarkar

Two Indian notables clash over India's past and future

Sohail Inayatullah constructs a dialogue around issues still vital for India today: non-violence, rural economy and interpreting the Indian independence movement



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Gandhi and Sarkar

On non-violence, rural economy and the Indian independence movement

Not all Indians agree with Gandhi's doctrine of ahimsa (also called satyagraha or non-violence) or his priorities in the Indian independence movement. Compare Gandhi with Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, who has been called India's greatest thinker this century. Sohail Inayatullah "interviews" the two of them

By Sohail Inayatullah, Ph.D.

Mahatma Gandhi and Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar are products of Indian cosmology and among the most significant thinkers to emerge from South Asia. Gandhi is well known for his non-violent philosophy and tactics but also for his critique of modernity and for his championing of local economics. Given the dangers of globalism today, Gandhi's relevance continues to increase. Sarkar is less well known. The controversial founder of the spiritual movement Ananda Marga and the socio-economy theory, PROUT, Sarkar

is considered by many to be one of the world's greatest thinkers. (Inayatullah, 1990) Sarkar provides a new map of self, society, economy and polity that articulates concerns for the future at least seven generations ahead. Sarkar, it appears, will be among those thinkers who create new discourses, new ways of understanding ourselves, and whose relevance will continue to increase into the far future.

Earlier in this century, even as they worked to transform the Indian episteme, and while Sarkar's life overlapped with Gandhi's for nearly 27 years, they did not meet. Sarkar was in

his late 20's when Gandhi died on January 30, 1948. But even if they did meet, it is not at all certain what they would have said.

Sarkar did not begin his social writings on PROUT (his theory of history, political economy and governance) until the late 1950's, and they are not from the same vedantic tradition as Gandhi's. Rather, as the nephew of Subhash Chandra Bose, he was influenced from a different direction - Tantra. He dedicated his first book, wherein he articulated his political economy, to Bose. In one essay, titled "The Man and the



Mahatma Gandhi



Shrii Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar (the editors regret that this is the only photo of Shrii Sarkar available for public use)

Ideology," Sarkar reminds us that various ambitious Congress Party leaders exploited the differences between the two men. Still, "the expression of their personal animosity and the serpentine noose of so-called Ahimsa were among the main reasons why Bose had to leave the country." (Sarkar, 1987, 22)

Defending Bose as one who passionately longed for the independence of India, he reminds us that "the Second World War was a war between two imperialist and expansionist forces," for, "neither the Axis or Allied powers were of the holy copper vessel and basil leaves that are bathed in the water of the Ganges." (23)

While Sarkar rarely mentions leaders and writers in his works, he does mention Gandhi as well as Marx. In both cases, he writes that he has profound respect for them as individuals, but that their ideologies are fundamentally "defective" in the real world. For Sarkar, the Independence leaders did not have any revolutionary zeal, nor any "clear cut constructive political strategy or socio-economic

programme." (21) While we will let Gandhi respond to this critique later, Sarkar adds that "while it is undeniable that Mahatma Gandhi awakened mass consciousness, he did not channelize this awakened mass consciousness along the path of [economic] struggle." (21) From Sarkar's view, if Gandhi had done so, true independence could have been possible - that is, sustained economic self-reliance.

In an earlier article on social justice, while concurring that violence only begets violence, and that attacking individual capitalists does not change the structure of society or the seeds of desire in others' minds, still Sarkar argues that Gandhi's moral appeals will not succeed.

"[Although his] ideas and ethics are of a high order, the soil of the world is too harsh for such pious appeals to collect their vital juice so easily for sustenance." (Sarkar, 1983, 38) And furthermore:

"What is human appeal, or passive resistance? In fact this also is nothing but the application of a special type of

force for creating circumstantial pressure. This we can call an application of intellectuo-moral force. By this a person agrees voluntarily or, in plain language, is compelled to proceed on the path of goodness, without taking recourse to any crude force, frown of law or bloodshed. What is this circumstantial pressure?

"A force whereby the individual or collective mind vibrates to the thrills of benevolent waves, is it not? Is it not the attempt to touch that part of the human mind which is the most tender and most vulnerable to human appeal, or passive resistance? Hence only those who are imaginative and whose minds have quite a fund of softness are amenable to passive resistance or human appeal. This kind of appeal does not carry much weight with the frigid mind. To make such minds as these responsive, it is, and shall always be, necessary to hit them extremely hard, or else one may have to wait *ad infinitum* in the fond hope of finding the delicate chord of the lyre in the secret recess of some implacable mind, to respond to such an honest supplication. By that time the carcasses

of those helpless, tormented people, for the mitigation of whose troubles the appeal is meant, will have been pulverised into dust." (38-39)

And in direct reference to Gandhi:

"No matter how highly Gandhism and similar movements rate human magnanimity, or how sage-like its expounders be, petty self-seeking people will not accept this policy as a matter of course. The foot sores of the trotter will fail to move their flinty minds. Gandhism is the paragon in the paradise of the imagination but in the world of reality it is but a bizarre self-righteousness." (39)

This is not to say that Sarkar advocates political violence, rather, as with Gandhi, he has a rather sophisticated theory on peace and violence. But we must here come to Gandhi's defence. As Mark Juergensmeyer reminds us, "Gandhi was a fighter. Whatever else one might say about him - that he was a saint, a clever politician, or simply an irascible little man - one must say this: he liked a good fight." (Juergensmeyer, 1984, 1) As Gandhi said, "Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would choose violence." (1)

But even as a fighter, soul force and non-violence were central to his worldview, while for Sarkar, non-violence is simply one of many characteristics of his cosmology. Certainly, as we will explore, Gandhi comes out stronger against direct

suffer. In violence others suffer too."

But let us not interfere with this conversation between the two. I will now interview these two leaders. Of course, this interview process is outside conventional space-time parameters.

Gandhi: As I just said, satyagraha is based on uncertainty. It avoids adding to the countless deeds of horror that have been perpetuated in history. Moreover, non-violence, or perhaps, least violence (to be correct philosophically) is not a weapon of the weak. It is a weapon of the strongest and the bravest.

Sarkar: Soul force can do little against the horror of history, or of the tragedy of present-day Calcutta. India is poorer now than ever. India is more in debt, has fought meaningless wars, and the future for the peasant does not look any better.

Inayatullah: Gandhiji, Shrii Sarkarjii may have a point. How would you comment on the following poem by Mark Twain?

There were two "Reigns of Terror,"
if we would but remember it and
consider it;
the one wrought murder in host
passion,
the other in heartless cold blood,
the one lasted mere months,
the other lasted a thousand years;
the one inflicted death upon a
thousand persons,

experimented with in my life is the type of force that begins the process of ending this silent suffering. It can begin the process of not only bringing individuals to God, to non-violence, but it can create the first-ever non-violent State.

Inayatullah: Please expand your notion of the non-violent State. How is it different from various conceptions of the State - for example, the State as protector of the interests of the landed; or the State as neutral and autonomous, simply responding to the various interests groups that pressure for its attention; or Marx's contention, that the executive is merely a committee for managing the affairs of the capitalist class; or modern notions of the State which see it as keeping the peace and managing the harsh by-products of the industrial system.

Gandhi: I cannot say exactly what a State would look like if the participants practiced non-violence. You see I do not have a fully worked-out model of everything as others might. But my goal would reduce the power of the State and develop the moral power of the individual and his and her community associations. I look upon horror at the expansion of the power of the State. Marx was partly right, the State does exploit the poor, but that does not justify a bloody revolution and the establishment of a new group of exploiters. I would like to see an enlightened anarchy. "In such a state,

✓ **"While it is undeniable that Mahatma Gandhi awakened mass consciousness, he did not channelize this awakened mass consciousness along the path of [economic] struggle" Shrii Sarkar**

violence than Sarkar. But Sarkar is much more aware of structural violence and the need to create "sattvic" peace (positive peace), a peace based on constant struggle. For Sarkar, absence of struggle is simply "tamasic" peace (negative peace). Gandhi is much more concerned with the means/ends question. "If we take care of the means, sooner or later we are bound to reach the ends." Moreover, his soul force, or truth force, is based on uncertainty: "If I am wrong, only I

the other upon a hundred millions;
but our shudders are all for the
"horrors"
of the minor terror, the momentary
terror, so to speak.

Gandhi: That is exactly my point. That is why we must be really revolutionary. What could be more revolutionary than non-violence, truth, and love? All three co-exist, they cannot exist independently of each other. The soul force that I

every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no State."

Sarkar: Some theories that sound wonderful have nothing to do with the real world. Often in the long run they cause more human suffering. In our world, there is a battle between the internal and external, good and evil.

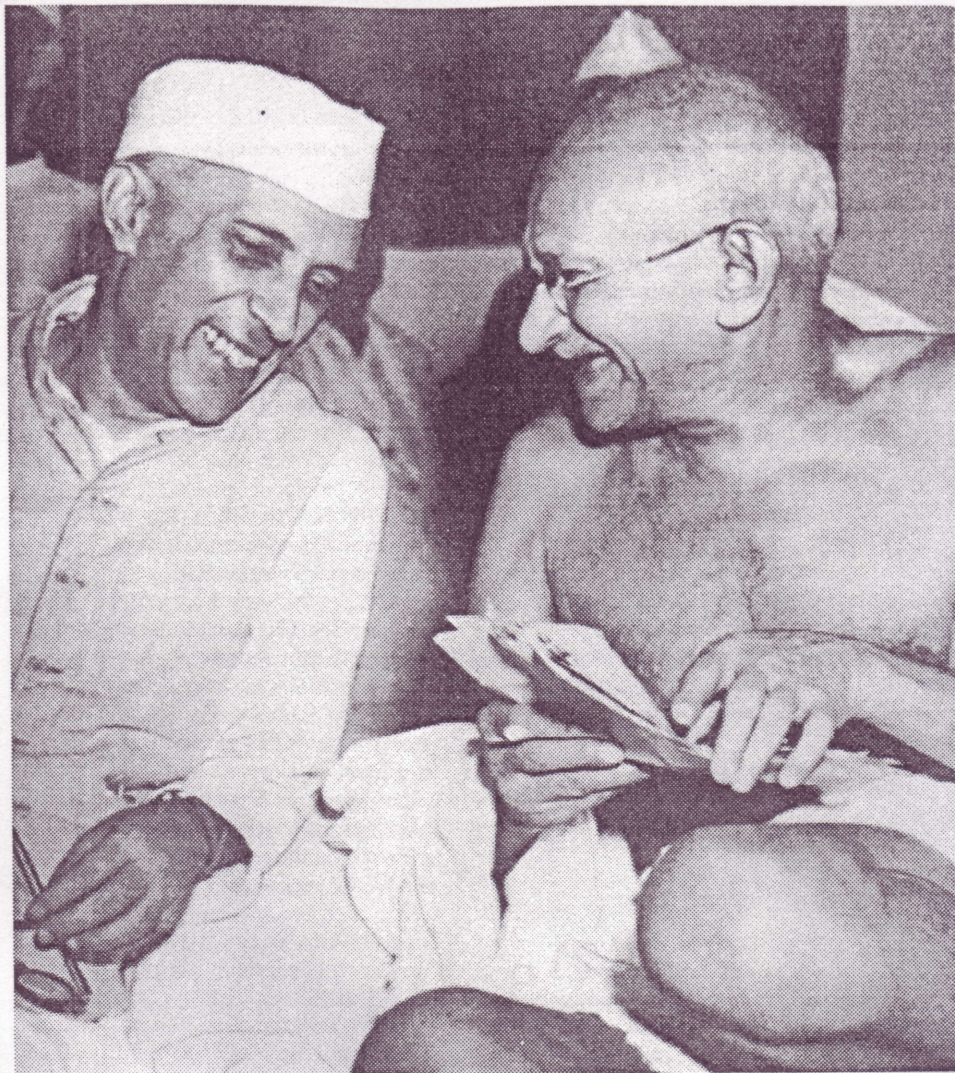
True, we need to increase the morality of individuals, but the resources of particular groups of people with particular interests - whether communal, racial, economic or caste - should not be underestimated. History is the history of the elite, it is not the history of the common man and woman. But I am very optimistic, I see a new era ahead of us, a new history for those who have been oppressed, for those that have been violated, but it will not be a workers' paradise, rule of the masses.

Rule of the masses quickly centralizes into rule of the martially-minded. Historically this has led to dynasties; in communist countries, it has led to the suppression of individual rights, with economic advantage going to privileged party members.

Rule of the so-called wise is simply the rule of Brahmins, the rule of those who propagate religious dogmas and use ideologies to limit the intellectual advancement of the masses.

Gandhi: All types of leadership can quickly become perverse, spiritual leadership as well. That is why we need democracy. A "society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary co-operation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence." A true democracy, "constitutional or democratic government is a distant dream so long as non-violence is not recognized as a living force, an inviolable creed, not a mere policy." More than that, I do not accept the absolute sovereignty of the State - "a real society will come not by acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused. In other words, self-rule is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority." The key to democracy is disobedience, but this must be non-violent and civil disobedience.

Sarkar: Democracy can only exist when there is education, otherwise candidates buy and sell voters. *Goondas* [hired thugs] go to houses and collect votes. Many of my workers have been brutally killed in Tripura and at Ananda Nagar - neither the Congress Party nor the Communist Party really



Gandhi with Nehru, both leaders in the fight for political independence from the British, chatting it up. The present condition of India is part of their legacy

believe in democracy. Without education, democracy is simply a sham. Marx was very right, the State exists for the rich. "A truly benevolent society will never come into being under the leadership of those who are solely concerned with profit and loss."

Nonetheless, so far democracy is the best system available to us. With love and inner moral strength perhaps the corruption of the politicians can be checked. "Any government - fascist, imperialist, republican, dictatorial, bureaucratic, or democratic - is sure to become tyrannical if there is no moral force to check the capricious activities of the leaders in power." What is needed is spiritual leadership - we need to create *sadvipras*: moral, spiritual activists who can guide society.

Gandhi: But the state must be secular. "If I were a dictator, religion and State would be separate. I swear by my religion. But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it."

Sarkar: Spirituality and religion are two words that have nothing in common. Spirituality is centered in

universal neo-humanism, a love for all living beings, a commitment to the rational, and a willingness to see all as part of the fundamental unity of being. Even with moral and spiritual persons providing general policy, the federal structure of government - separating legislative, executive and judicial powers - is a good one. We need, however, to imagine a global governance system, a world government.

Gandhi: Yes, we need idealism. I think we agree that power is everywhere, not just in the State. As much as the history of humanity is the history of suffering, it is also the history of courage, of resistance. I see history as partly progressive, as moving towards ahimsa (non-violence) - that is my theory of history. In either case, it seems we agree on many things.

Sarkar: There is a progressive movement in history, it is an attraction of the Great. But there are also cyclical elements, the rise and fall of collective psychologies. History takes the order of the rule of *shudras* (laborers), then

ksattriyas (the martially minded), then *vipras* (intellectuals and priests), and then *vaeshyas* (merchants and financiers). Each stage brings in new ideas and innovations and then over time it stagnates, it mercilessly exploits

✓ **“Only those who are imaginative and whose minds have quite a fund of softness are amenable to passive resistance or human appeal” Shrii Sarkar**

the others. In the vaeshyan era, exploitation is at its worst. A shudra revolution results and the cycle continues. While we cannot change this basic structure, we can eliminate the exploitive phases of the cycle, so that we have an upward movement in history. But ultimately progress is spiritual; cyclicity is the essence of all non-spiritual forces.

Gandhi: “The moment man awakes to the Spirit within he cannot remain violent. Either he progresses towards ahimsa or rushes to his doom. ... [If there is no progress, there is inevitable retrogression. No one can remain without the eternal cycle unless it be God Himself.”

Inayatullah: Gandhijii, although the discussion has moved back and forth between structure (divine or historical laws) and individual, don't people differ with respect to individual nature? Can you impose your model of non-violence on others?

Gandhi: “That is the main reason why violence is eliminated and a satyagrahi gives his opponent the same right of independence and feelings of liberty that he reserves himself, and he will fight by inflicting injuries on his own person.” We are committed to civil disobedience, not criminal disobedience. No grand universal theory of non-violence is

implied.

Inayatullah: So non-violence is contextual, essentially local. Can we talk of religion now? Although you say you want to separate religion and politics, that has not been your practice.

Gandhi: My religion is that which transcends Hinduism, it is that “which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolvably to the truth, and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost as too great in order to find full expression, which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its maker, and appreciated the true correspondence between the maker and itself.” It is as Sarkarjii has said: a spiritual humanism, a neo-humanism, one inextricably linked to ahimsa.

Inayatullah: But aren't you both fundamentally influenced by Hinduism? Shrii Sarkar, your history of class cycles emerges from the classic *varna* (caste) system, and although you are critical of *varna*, you maintain that the cycle will continue forever, though the exploitative period of each ruling elite will be eliminated. And Gandhi, your ideal economy, although decentralized, non-industrial, and fundamentally basic-needs oriented, still sees *varna* as the ideal division of labor. Shrii Sarkar, you trace your lineage from Shiva, and although you have certainly rethought much of Tantric cosmology, the notion of struggle, social dialectics, mysticism, and the creation of a “well knit” social order remain central to your work. While you Gandhi, are through and through a vedantist, a monist.

Gandhi: All what you say is true, but I do not think other Hindu leaders have emphasized non-violence in the way I have. Moreover, other leaders have become gurus, while I remain uncertain of my spirituality, in doubt and constantly failing myself. I have also been deeply influenced by the West, in positive and negative ways. True, when asked what I thought of Western civilization, I responded that “it would be a nice idea,” but this exposure has allowed me in some ways to move outside my history, and hopefully become more universal.

Sarkar: Shiva was not a Hindu, he was the father of Tantra. He started a spiritual tradition based on practice. My mission is not to have others believe this or that, but to practice intuitional methods, to go deep within, experience the inner states of being, and then attempt to explain this rationally in a language for all to understand. I am in India, as I can be most of service here. My emphasis on Bengal and India has been a project of recovery of sublime spiritual culture. Exploitation is not only an economic matter, it is primarily psychological - to powder down minds to create a condition of inferiority. Through my work in Bengali - poetry, philology, songs - we hope to recover what was one of the originating points of civilization. As you know, I speak many languages, who comes to me, I speak in their language, but as with the Mahatma, the language we speak is not that of Hinduism, but that of the heart.

Inayatullah: Gandhijii, besides non-violence, you have emphasized the spinning wheel as a defining metaphor for your vision of the good society and as your solution to poverty and development. However, after your death, India did not follow your decentralized model, instead it sought to join the ranks of the industrially developed, it attempted planned capitalism. The

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results have been a massive, often, corrupt bureaucracy; a green revolution that has left poor tenants not only landless, but jobless as well; ecological



Village-based textile industry

devastation; and a ratio between the income of the richest and the poorest that is nearly two thousand to one. Nowadays your model is often talked of as appropriate technology, and throughout the world, there is the Green movement, which in many ways shares your vision, and to some extent Shrii Sarkar's as well.

Gandhi: Yes, for me the center of an ideal political economy is the village, and the key to revival of the village is the spinning wheel. "In my dream, in my sleep, while eating, I think of the spinning wheel. The spinning wheel is my sword. To me it is the symbol of India's liberty." Of course, those after me did not follow that path. They believed in the Western development model. It is this model that I have done my best to criticize. I have also learned from socialism. "For me the socialism that India can assimilate is the socialism of the spinning wheel. Indeed, the spinning wheel is as much a necessity of Indian life as air and water. The spinning wheel and the spinning wheel alone will solve, if anything will solve, the problem of the desperate poverty of India."

Sarkar: Technology exists in a larger cultural context. Within a Proutist society, wherein there are limits to wealth, to hoarding, and where it is recognized that all ownership rests with the Supreme Consciousness, such that

"every property of this universe is the joint ownership of all living beings", technology can lead to progress, to increased standards of living. True, we need to localize industries, to move them into rural areas, we need to form cooperatives among small farmers, protect them, make sure that they are not corrupted. We need localism, people's movements. But that is different from an obsession with spinning wheels. With new technologies, under a cooperative social structure, labor can work less, with increased productivity. Working time can be reduced to a few days a week. The rest of the time can be spent in other activities.

Gandhi: With spinning wheels there is a dignity of labor. There is a possibility of self-reliance. With industrialization, there is only a commodification of labor. It is not technology that I am against, but technocracy. It is Western modernity that has robbed us of who we are. This is not only a psychological phenomenon, it has occurred through science and technology. With my spinning wheel, we can resist centralization, urbanization, bureaucratization and technocratization. If the Soviets had used it, they could have resisted "party-ization". Technology is not neutral - it has myths, beliefs and values associated with it, it carries a hidden code.

Sarkar: Growth is also required. India, indeed, the entire planet, has so many resources - intellectual, spiritual, physical - at individual and national

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levels that can be tapped, so our standard of living can grow. With a renewed sense of culture, we can begin to develop our own technologies, based on local knowledge, local expertise, for self-use, and barter with other communities. Through international barter arrangements we can increase the standard of living of all of India. See, the goal of life is not work, it is a mission. We must liberate ourselves

from the drudgery of unnecessary work.

Gandhi: Work gives us dignity. It brings us back to ourself. It gives us purpose. It aids in controlling the mind, lest it create mischief.

Sarkar: Look at the peasant in the field, sweating all day and night for a bit of food. We need self-reliance and decentralization, but we must change our notion of work to mission. Still, the mind does need to be occupied, but most work is merely exploited labor that only helps the vaeshyan class. Women's work in particular is not valued. We need a culture of coordinated cooperation between women and men, where women's potential is no longer suppressed.

Inayatullah: How would both of you deal with Third World foreign debt and the problem of increasing poverty?

Sarkar: Poor nations have paid enough, they are now only paying the interest rates. We should stop paying. A Proutist government would not pay anymore.

Gandhi: The financial economy must be based on the real economy and not on global speculation. However, in our strategy, our intention would not be to hurt the banks. Our goal is not to cause violence, as when we boycotted British goods, but simply to survive, to develop and regain dignity.

Inayatullah: But didn't you make

some startling comments to Louis Fischer in 1942? I think the conversation went like this:

Gandhi: In the villages the peasants will stop paying the taxes. This will give them courage to think that they are capable of independent action. Their next stop will be to seize the land.

Fischer: With violence?

Gandhi: There may be violence. But

✓ **"We need to localize industries, to move them into rural areas, we need to form cooperatives among small farmers, protect them, make sure that they are not corrupted" (Shril Sarkar's view)**

then again the landlords may cooperate.

Fischer: You are an optimist.

Gandhi: They might cooperate by fleeing.

Fischer: Or they might organize violent resistance.

Gandhi: There may be fifteen days of chaos, but I think, we could soon bring that under control.

Yet you are critical of those who believe force can change socio-economic conditions.

Gandhi: The ends should not be more important than means at times. As I have said many times, "There is no road to self-reliance, self-reliance is the road." This is true for peace as well.

Inayatullah: But your comments to Fischer are different from your other efforts to gain land through spiritual appeals to landlords. What type of stewardship would there be if landlords are forced to give up their lands?

Gandhi: Yes, there are times when such activities are necessary.

Sarkar: Our enemy are not capitalists. "The one who exploits the masses is also a person; this must never be lost sight of even for a moment." Greed is everywhere. And once the land has been redistributed you cannot impose a collective system, any system. The USSR tried to impose collective farming by force. Severe famines were produced with massive civil unrest, many were

killed. What is needed is the gradual development of a cooperative system. With strong administration, morality, and support of the people, the cooperative system can succeed. Our top priority will be finding employment for surplus labor in undeveloped regions.

Inayatullah: You think India's economic problem's can be solved.

Sarkar: Actually, easily solved, but it will involve major changes. The present system is irrational and it will not, can not, last much longer. Not only India's problems but the world's problems can be solved.

Inayatullah: It is this type of language that worries laissez-faire bankers and statesman throughout the world. Nations that do not pay their debts become pariahs in the international system. Cooperatives will compete against larger multinationals and take away the commodity labor needed for capitalists. In the last ten years, India has made remarkable strides in increasing its foreign reserves, largely by reducing the power of bureaucracies, investing in telecommunications, doing the manual labor in the electronics industry and then slowly moving up the chain, with Indian multinationals now even doing software design.

Sarkar: That is partly my point. Technology should not be seen as necessarily evil. At the same time, there remains an imbalance. *Prama*, dynamic balance, is needed between different sectors of the economy: the local and world economy; humans and nature; and the different dimensions of ourselves. My program is based on a strong people's market economy and not a nationalised economy. Government, especially corrupt government, cannot free the economy. I see three levels - a large dynamic cooperative economy, an individual local market economy, and a large-industry state-run economy. Still, capitalism is the problem of the day, there is no getting around that.

Inayatullah: You both appear to have contradictions in your thought that are not problems for either one of you. Perhaps it is because you are strategists as well as philosophers or perhaps that is the nature of Hinduism. But Gandhi, let

us discuss a man who has written a book that is informed by your vision.

In his marvellous book, *Traditions, Tyranny and Utopias*, Ashis Nandy tells that us Godse killed you because of your rejection of modernity, not because of your moderate hinduism. Godse, in his last speech before his death sentence, made a plea "to recognize the dangers [you] posed to the growth of the modern state in India [increasingly liberal, individualistic, democratic, export-oriented] and to the conduct of rational, normal politics along the lines Kissinger would have approved of." (Nandy, 1987, 130)

In another place, he pays glowing tribute to your mission:

"Again, of all the major critics of modernity, Gandhi was one of the few to offer a radical critique of urban-industrialism and modern science.

"And this without opting out of organized politics like a mystic or a saint [as many utopians tend to].

"He would not accept the urban-

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industrial vision in the name of progress, and he refused to place science outside culture or history. Unlike Marx he did not seek to reform the social relationships of modernity; he rejected modernity itself. Unlike Mao Zedong, who shared some of his concerns, Gandhi never dreamt of entering a race with the modern West to beat it at its own game; he sensed the exhaustion of this civilization after four hundred years of Western exposure and two hundred years of colonialism. He envisioned a new game drawing upon some very old rules and conventions. And unlike Freud, who while providing a fundamental critique of the Western culture in Gandhi's time, was unaware of the idealization of adulthood, masculinity and normality in his own work, Gandhi was willing to be irresponsible, effeminate, immature and insane." (158- 159)

Gandhi: Those are very kind words, although I do not know about the insane.

Inayatullah: I think he means that as a good critical activist, your behavior confused contemporary notions of rationality. Who, for example, fasts at every juncture to move attention to various issues?

Gandhi: Yes, more than what Nandy is saying, I also reject the history of evolution and the idea in Marxism that you can transform society with massive social engineering. In fact it is this theory of progress that has suppressed us.

Sarkar: Nandy points to how we need to recreate the world through critically transforming our traditions. This is what I have done with Tantra. From this historical perspective, I imagine us moving into a new world.

It is a world where mysticism is a powerful positive force of the spirit brought to bear on the real world, as part of a new world view. The technology that we are to develop is not only physical but also psycho-spiritual, though it is not within the current language of technocracy. There are spiritual energies deep in the mind, and the use of *microvita* - packets of consciousness, sometimes nearly mental and sometimes nearly physical - can spread ideas throughout the world.

Fields of awareness are now being shared.

In this new world, I do not see a return to the spinning wheel, I see a return to dignity, but it will be a hard-fought one. There is a spiritual sense of a unified humanity; even the most cynical person knows this in his heart. We are approaching a world government based on bioregional federations.

True, the structure of oppression remains, but the wheel is moving. There may be a world depression, and in that pause, the possibility of progressive forces to create a new world is great. That is why I remain optimistic. We are at the end of the capitalist system, and it is this end that we should rejoice in. "Now humanity is at the threshold of a new era, and so many epoch-making events, so many annals of history are to be created by the humans of today. [We should be] ready to shoulder that responsibility for ages to come."

Gandhi: I too am convinced the future is bright. Truth and non-violence will persevere.

Inayatullah: Any last comments?

Gandhi: The strategies I used to mobilize people were easier when we had a clear enemy like the British. It is more difficult now. The problems are everywhere. We must begin with ourselves. We must live in a simple manner.

Sarkar: My strategies are multifold. Teaching meditation through Ananda Marga; social service through Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team; developing a partnership society through the Women's Welfare Division; challenging local and regional exploitation through regional socioeconomic movements and worker's and student's federations; offering a new theory of political economy through PROUT; revitalizing Bengali music and language through *Prabhat Samgita* [songs of a new dawn], *Varna Vijimana* [Science of Letters], *Varna Vicitra* [Variety of Letters] and *Shabda Cayanika* [Encyclopaedia] - and, most important, creating a devotional vibration in the world, a softness, a fearless love.

Gandhi: It is love with non-violent

social activism that can and will change the world.

Sarkar: "Soon the day will come when the moralists of the world are united in their activities, well-organized and courageous. That long-awaited day is now not too distant and with its advent, the dawn of a glorious new era of progressive socialism will be just around the corner - human society will take its first deep breath of fresh air."

Gandhi: I am just sorry I could not have lived to help in these efforts. We were so caught up in the independence struggle, there was so much left undone.

Inayatullah: An understandable lament, Gandhiji. But the cost has been, as Shrii Sarkar knows very well, the continuation of colonialism. Economic transformation and cultural upliftment must go with political independence, otherwise the result is a meaningless sovereignty. But let us leave this discussion for another interview. Thanks so much for your time. (*People's News Agency*)

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Sohail Inayatullah is a researcher at the Communication Centre. Box 2434, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 4001. Australia, S.Inayatullah@qut.edu.au. While he never met Gandhiji, he did meet Shrii Sarkar in 1989. This essay is part of a series of books on Sarkar: *Situating Sarkar; Understanding Sarkar; and Transcending Boundaries* (edited with Jennifer Fitzgerald). No offense is intended by this essay to students and devotees of Gandhi or Shrii Sarkar.