The Antinomies of Modernity and Sustainability? Developing an Indian Perspective on Governance and Responsibility

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Introduction

What are the different ways in which we can define and approach the issue of sustainable development? This paper starts with a discussion of the views of Gandhi and Ambedkar in the Indian context. Both Gandhi and Ambedkar played crucial roles in shaping the public discourse on 'development', and in constructing India's post-colonial legal and political structure. While Gandhi explicitly expressed his views on sustainable development, Ambedkar was keener on social, economic, political, and technological change which will modernize society. While he did not negate the idea of sustainability, modern interpreters have used his ideas to push sustainability issues to the background. This paper will take this argument further to probe the issue of whether sustainability is essentially a post-modernist problem? In other words do we first have to modernize and face sustainability problems in the interests of democracy and equity objectives? Contrarily, does sustainability necessarily involve traditional or customary practices with its baggage of discriminatory or biased social practices?

The ideas of Gandhi – the most dominant figure in India's nationalist, anti-colonial struggle – are now well known around the world among scholars and activists. In the West, he is most famous for his ideas on non-violence. His ideas and thoughts on development while always well known in India, are currently enjoying a resurgence as part of new social movements fighting for more sustainable, decentralized, small-scale and participatory forms of development. Ambedkar is relatively less known outside India. Chiefly known as the architect of India's post-colonial constitution, and as the leader of India's anti-caste movement striving for social emancipation for millions in India marginalized by its caste

hierarchies, his ideas are increasingly being drawn upon as India struggles to come to terms with its continuing hierarchical social structure and inequalities even in the face of rapid economic change. His conversion to Buddhism in 1956 (Zelliot 2005) as a response to the unresponsiveness of India's upper caste to bring about meaningful social emancipation has been little discussed from a sociological point of view even within India. While its political meaning and implications have been explained by scholars, Ambedkar's modern and novel interpretation of Buddhist thought and their implications for more equitable and sustainable models of development and governance have rarely attracted scholarly attention. This is in part because mainstream scholars in India have regarded Ambedkar as being merely a leader of the *dalits* – the most marginalized of the castes, and not as an intellectual leader of modern India's social and political change.

In this paper, a rereading of Gandhi and Ambedkar reveals that technological and economic modernization need not necessarily lead us to democratization and social equity. On the contrary both Gandhi and Ambedkar lead us to believe that the goals of social change and development must be met not just with the intervention of law but primarily through transformation of social relations with the help of a sound governance framework. Gandhi takes a social movement and reform approach, while Ambedkar takes a more constitutional approach – but both stress the responsibility of the individual towards society in different ways. Both advance the notion of governance as we understand it and help provide a unique Indian perspective on it. And both give significant importance to the notion of responsibility - Gandhi by focusing on the need for it, and Ambedkar by commenting on the lack of it. The question of choice is conceptualized as being prior to the resolution of the responsibility issue, and it is here that a combination of the views of Gandhi and Ambedkar provide a more nuanced view (with Ambedkar adopting a Buddhist approach) of the relationship between responsibility, citizenship, and governance, a perspective that is different from both conservative and liberal Western views. Especially to be noted here is the way in which the issue of individual freedom is reconciled with social obligations and social well-being.

The paper also reviews some contemporary debates between social activists fighting against unfair development practices on the one hand and women's and *dalit* activists on the other. The last part of the paper will use some findings from previous field studies in rural Maharashtra to support a hypothesis regarding the relationship between modernity, sustainable development and responsibility. By looking at case studies of social transformation which have occurred with the assistance of sound leadership, greater collective action, breakdown of social divisions, expansion of market, and technological

change, the paper attempts to offer a unified perspective on law, governance and development.

Indian Debates on sustainability and modernization

Post-modernists in India and from Western societies have drawn our attention to the significant problems that modernization as a process has given rise to. Not least of these is the danger to the environment resulting from the pursuit of a technocratic approach to economic development based on a narrow reductionist scientific approach (Shiva 1993; Nandy 1990). In the Indian context, such debates have been intertwined with the perspectives of environmental activists and other activists and social movements / NGOs working for a more pro-poor approach to economic growth, and seeking to defend the 'victims' of development (for instance the Narmada Bachao Andolan[1]). In the process, the many advantages of indigenous and traditional approaches to resource management, conservation, and development paths have been pointed out. One influential approach in this regard has been the Gandhian approach to development and growth based on a concern for resource conservation, decentralization, and small scale, village based development models. Against this background it is significant to note that processes of economic liberalization, deregulation and privatization and opening up of the markets to global capital have thrown up interesting debates over the last decade and a half in India. While most political parties in India seem to have arrived at a consensus on the need for economic 'reform' and liberalization, there is also a fairly strong opposition to these changes from new social movements and peoples' organizations (for example the struggle against large dams, genetically modified organisms, Special Economic Zones, large mining projects). However leaders and spokespersons for the *dalits* – the ex untouchables – in India have welcomed these projects for their perceived ability to modernize society and economy and destroy the remnant feudal and traditional social structure – which are seen as the agents of oppression, exploitation and domination over *dalits*, the tribal (or *adivasi)* population and women[2]. Such a position also stems from their perception of the state in India which they believe to have been captured by upper caste elites and is therefore no longer capable of bringing about social

[1] The Narmada Bachao Andolan is a movement which initially started to support the claims of thousands of people displaced by the Sardar Saorvar Project on the Narmada river in west and central India. It is now a larger movement spread across India which takes up issues affecting the poor in rural and urban India.

[2] Among others, the scholarly and journalistic writings of the sociologist Gail Omvedt (see bibliography) have been the most visible and also the target of criticism by those who disagree with this position.

change and reform through the social engineering approaches favoured in the decades after independence (Ilialh 1997). It is this debate that is elaborated and commented upon in this paper – and an important reason for doing so is the way in which this debate links together issues of sustainable development, modernization / modernity, and governance – the linkage itself not being subject to analysis in the existing literature.

Intervening in debates on displacement and resettlement due to mega infrastructure projects, as well as on issues related to India's economic reforms, scholars such as Gail Omvedt have argued that 1) social and cultural modernization is more important in the short run than issues of ecological and economic sustainability, and displacement of people (Omvedt 1999), and that 2) globalization, international linkage of markets, and economic liberalization, if properly handled, can bring about social change through abolition of feudal remnants in society making the opportunity structure in society more equitable and accessible to all (Omvedt, 1995). India's hierarchical society with deep-rooted prejudices and discriminatory behaviour towards women, people of lower castes, the rural and urban poor, and minority religious groups provide the context for this debate. This approach is based on the premise that discriminatory practices and a hierarchical status based social structure needs to be broken up – and this can only be done with the help of economic modernization and introduction of modern technologies. In other words, modernization of society in all forms is privileged over sustainability goals – based on an assumption that modern technologies will help us resolve sustainability issues which they themselves have created in the past.

Such an approach partly derives from the views expressed by Ambedkar, the chief architect of India's constitution, and an influential thinker on issues of social justice and equity in India, and an important figure in the struggle for social justice and freedom from discrimination by marginalized groups. In his debates with Gandhi on the caste system, the Indian social structure, and the pathways to social change, a significant area of intervention for Ambedkar was the role of technology. For Ambedkar, culture, the ability to reason, and the cultivation of mind are what distinguish humans from animals, "what divides the brute from man (sic)" (Ambedkar 1945: 283-284)). Technology, by reducing toil and drudgery, and increasing leisure helps human beings to devote themselves "to a life of culture". He thus argues that "machinery and modern civilization are indispensable for emancipating man (sic) from leading the life of a brute, and for providing him (sic) with leisure and for making a life of culture possible" (Ambedkar 1945: 283-284). Further he criticizes critics of modern technology such as Gandhi by stating that "the man (sic) who condemns machinery and

modern civilization simply does not understand their purpose and the ultimate aim which human society must strive to achieve." (Ambedkar 1945: 285).

On the contrary, for Gandhi, machinery which contribute to greater control and centralization of human work and human society, and which make inefficient and wasteful use of natural resources are a chief source of unsustainable economic growth, and of social disorganization and anomie (Gandhi 1997). If human beings are to achieve their true potential and live in harmony with nature, Gandhi's solution was to decentralize, make the village as the site of production, exchange, and consumption, by using small-scale technologies using locally available renewable resources (Gandhi 1997). In short, Gandhi's approach was to make machines serve human beings rather than being enslaved by modern technology – in other words 'production by the masses, and not mass production'. For Gandhi, social evils were a moral problem. Changes in values, the moral system of organization and moral rules to govern human behaviour and interaction were of importance in bringing about social change away from iniquitous, discriminatory, and hierarchical social structures (Gandhi 1960).

What is interesting is that both Ambedkar and Gandhi are actively pursuing goals of social and human emancipation albeit using different approaches and with different means. While Gandhi believed that scale of human organization and production are important for sustainable development and human emancipation, for Ambedkar the type or nature of social organization is to be changed to ensure greater equality, freedom from discrimination, and equitable economic development. Social organization can subordinate modern technology to meet human goals, if we avoid giving absolute sanctity to 'private property and pursuit of personal gain' (Ambedkar 1987). The issue of human or social organization brings us to the theme of governance, and to the question of what kind of governance structures, institutions, and mechanisms aid sustainable development. At this stage, it is important to remember that sustainable development and resource conservation have become yet another set of issues offering an excuse for society, classes, and governments to intervene and exercise greater control on human beings. Drawing from Foucault's work on governmentality, several scholars point to the increasing regulation of human behaviour – sometime to the extent of taking resources away from their traditional users, custodians and stewards – using resource conservation imperatives and sustainable development as a reason (O'Farrell 1997). It is therefore important that before addressing the issue of governance and sustainable development, we gain a better understanding of the concept of responsibility – since, despite the debates over rights and responsibilities as part of discussions on democratic citizenship, it

is the environmental crisis that has mainstreamed in a major way the issue of human responsibility to other living organisms and nature.

Dharma or Dhamma? Hindu and Buddhist interpretations of responsibility

The issue of responsibility is dealt with in their writings and speeches by both Gandhi and Ambedkar but has received little scholarly attention, and this is especially true of Ambedkar who innovatively interprets the Buddhist concept of Dhamma to expand the notion of duty into that of a positive sense of responsibility.

Scholars have pointed out the contradiction of Gandhi using the Bhagavad-Gita (a Hindu holy text) – essentially a text which advocates the use of violence as a duty – to preach non-violence, peace, and harmony with nature (Kosambi 1962). The Hindu concept of Dharma as enunciated in the Bhagavad-Gita is essentially an outcome insensitive approach towards duty and responsibility. According to this view one has to perform one's duty irrespective of the anticipated consequences and outcome for oneself or for society. Such a concept of Dharma has been traditionally used in India to justify the caste and gender based division of labour and society, force people to perform their obligations as Dharma, as religious duty without care for the outcomes, and without thought regarding whether an action is right or wrong. Dharma is more of a duty or obligation rather than responsibility, and while it may help to protect people or environment as a duty, it is also capable of being used for environmentally destructive economic activities, or for promoting indifference to the suffering of nature and of other human beings brought about by one's actions.

Despite his support for this concept of Dharma, in practice Gandhi's approach was to deviate from this conception, and instead propose a more positive concept of responsibility – one that is non-exploitative, based on self-control and self-restraint in consumption and life-style, and a promotion of the idea of stewardship, that one is only a temporary custodian of wealth and resources, and hence one has to use one's assets and skills to promote the welfare of others including that of nature (Gandhi 1997).

On the other hand, disappointed with the Hindu approach towards social reform – especially of the caste system, Ambedkar towards the end of his life did a serious study of Buddhist thought and converted along with hundreds of thousands of his followers to the Buddhist faith in 1956 (Zelliott 2005). One chief attraction of Buddhism was its support for republican forms of social organization and governance. Yet another was the concept of responsibility embedded in the Buddhist notion of Dhamma – which Ambedkar interpreted

creatively to avoid standard criticisms of this concept, but also with a view to go beyond the narrow views of responsibilities elaborated in Western liberal and conservative thought.

In Western thought, the notion of responsibility has been dealt with in several ways. One way is to include it in a 'thick' conception of citizenship where rights and responsibilities are seen as being mutually supportive. Here responsibility is seen in terms of certain forms of behaviour related to obligatory performances. In general liberals have emphasized rights rather than responsibilities (Faulks 2000) giving scope to social and religious conservatives to attack this notion of citizenship. The needs of the individual and the needs of the wider community may be in opposition, and here the individual is given primacy in liberal thought – an approach that is particularly weak in the context of sustainability issues. Neo-liberal approaches to responsibilities predominantly rest on the assertion of market rights and self-reliance and do not add much to the debate on sustainability. Social conservatives and communitarians have been critical of liberal and neo-liberal approaches to the idea of citizenship and the concept of rights embedded within that idea. These latter have sought to subordinate individual rights to control by family or community (including political community). In addition environmentally informed approaches to citizenship and responsibility stress the importance of communal restrictions on and regulation of production, consumption, and exchange, since individualism tends to lead to over consumption, and the reduction of stewardship related duties and responsibilities. These have been well elaborated in the vast literature on commons and common pool resources.

Much of Western liberal and conservative, or even radical thought, has tended towards overemphasizing rights or responsibilities – or a fringe group advocating anarchism. Scholars or activists have not adequately addressed the issue of evolving an alternative governance system within a democratic framework that combines rights and responsibilities to give equal importance to rights, obligations, and responsibilities. It is here that Ambedkar's innovative interpretation of Dharma offers a new approach. For many scholars "Buddhism presented itself as a politically and socially formative factor", demonstrating "an obvious interest in questions of common ethics", and applying " specific features of the Buddhist explanation of the origin and removal of suffering to the social and political sphere, that is, to war, social discord, crime, poverty, legal insecurity, etc" (Schmidt-Leukel 2004: 36-37). There has been interesting work on the issue of Buddhist approaches to human rights (Traer 1988). Particular emphasis has been given to the aspect of governance, by focusing on the duties of the ruler towards the ruled in terms of respecting the rights of the people. However, scholars such as Perry Schmidt-Leukel have pointed out that there is a danger in Buddhist (and other

religious) approaches that their high conception and ideals of ethics may be forcibly imposed on others, since the concept of individual liberty is not well enunciated.

It is in this context that Ambedkar's innovative interpretation of Dhamma becomes useful. The word Dhamma is interpreted to mean "moral duty". For Ambedkar, Dhamma is not religion as Hindu scholars have sought to explain it. Dhamma is social, not spiritual (Ambedkar 1992a). Thus he even counters Western secular views of religion which seek to push religion to the private or personal sphere. He states that "the centre of Dhamma is man, and the relation of man to man" (Ambedkar 1992b: 22). By putting it this way Ambedkar at once combines individual rights and the responsibility of individuals to others. This is further reinforced when we understand the Buddhist approach reiterated by Ambedkar that the essence of Buddhism is social transformation through individual transformation (Ambedkar 1992b). What this means is that the means of bringing about social change has to be based on individual practice. So for Ambedkar, Dhamma is about looking after one's individual welfare, but doing so in a way which also looks after the collective and individual welfare of others. How is this different from usual moral exhortations to lead lives of restraint and control to avoid inflicting damage to the environment? The crucial issue for Ambedkar was that how one leads one's life is not merely a question of individual or personal choices in one's everyday activities. Rather how one leads one's life is also related to one's behaviour with reference to positive action to transform society. Thus, it is not enough if one stops discriminating publicly but practices rituals or customs in private which are related to discriminatory social customs or institutions. It is not only important that one leads a life which completely departs from any behaviour that is exclusive, but it is of equal importance to publicly denounce or strive for a cause one believes in[3]. Applying this to sustainability issues, simple life-style changes would not be adequate to achieve sustainability goals. What is required would be advocacy and struggle for a sustainable society by changing one's relations with other human beings, and with nature[4].

[3] In castigating Hindu society for its failure to fight against untouchability for instance Ambedkar asks "Has a Hindu any conscience? Is he ever known to have been fired with a righteous indignation against a moral wrong?" (Ambedkar, 1945: 273). To fight for a right even when it affects one's own interests is a sign of responsible behaviour.

[4] The position of the United States on the Kyoto Protocol, that adhering to it would affect its economic growth would be an indicator of irresponsibility according to the 'responsible' approach to sustainability.

Responsibility and Governance

It is here that the notion of responsibility elaborated in the concept of Dhamma also relates to the concept of governance. Ambedkar states that Dhamma is that "universal morality which protects the weak from the strong, which provides common models, standards, and rules, and which safeguards the growth of the individual. It is what makes liberty and equality effective..." (1987: 7). Dhamma then, provides codes of conduct for us to behave and act, not only with reference to enhancing one's own welfare but also with reference to being responsible for the welfare of others. Private property rights is one important way in which social organization creates inequality, conflict, and exploitation according to Ambedkar. The absence of leisure creating, culture-enhancing technology is another. An effective social organization which ensures rights and responsibilities will emerge if we follow the principles of Dhamma, and which is guaranteed by a constitution and government that ensures that people's rights are protected and they fulfil their responsibilities. Unlike Gandhi who believes that public protests and moral exhortation will lead people to fulfil their responsibilities, and unlike constitutionalists who believe that responsibilities have to be mandated by law, Ambedkar feels that the governance mechanism should merely facilitate the assurance of rights and responsibilities, with citizens following the principles of Dhamma to lead lives which enhance their own welfare and at the same time fulfilling their social obligations through choices that meet both goals of rights and responsibilities (Ambedkar 1987 and 1992b).

The question of choice is where the Gandhian approach can be integrated with Ambedkar's approach to responsibility and governance. While modern technology may enhance choice, Gandhi questions the real nature of the choice that we get, our ability to choose wisely, and the long term consequences of our choices (Gandhi 1997). A number of studies from the Indian context reveal examples of technology led modernization leading to persistence of feudal social structures and discriminatory and iniquitous social practices. At the same time there are also outstanding examples of environmentally sustainable models leading to more enlightened and emancipatory forms of social organization[5]. Ultimately then, the issue seems to be one of social organization, and how we govern ourselves, and it is here that a combination of the notions of responsibility elaborated by Gandhi and Ambedkar will

[5] For example, the Chipko movement which emerged in the early 1970s in the western Himalayas when local peasants hugged trees to prevent destruction of forests, when contractors came for green felling.

assist us in our experiments and search for better models of governance for sustainable development.

Modernity is not just about technologies or economic models but also about how humans relate to each other. Viewed in this way there is little to choose between temporally different approaches to social organization. Approaches which stress the modernization aspect of modern capitalistic models of economic growth and technological change tend to de-emphasize the corollary forms of social organization which even as they promote individualism may very well exist in association with feudal remnants of society, in addition to long term impacts on sustainability and human relations. By bringing the human relation aspect back into the debate, both Gandhi and Ambedkar depart from narrow materialistic or economistic responses to complex questions of social inequality, governance, and sustainable development. It is this attention to how human beings relate to each other, and how they govern their relations and relationship with nature that might ultimately provide us solutions for a sustainable future.

To comprehend how technology led sustainable development approaches can be combined with more equitable forms of human relations and self-governance, two illustrations, drawn from the state of Maharashtra in western India, will be presented in the following pages.

Technology and Social Change: Social capital and gender in Umra

The village of Umra is located in the "backward" region of Marathwada of the state of Maharashtra. The region is popularly and officially termed as backward not only due to its economic backwardness identified in terms of poverty, illiteracy, health, and lack of infrastructure, but also in terms of the persistence of feudal forms of social structure reflected in higher levels of caste based inequalities, domination, and conflicts (Padmaja et al 2006). The village has been studied for over a decade and a half as part of a 'constraints and adoption of technology' study by a team led by social scientists at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics. In tracking low levels of adoption of a groundnut production technology package in the dryland region, it was found that Umra was one of the few villages to sustain adoption of this technology over a long period without official government and other support. The technology was developed to offer sustainable options in a dry resource scarce region. In trying to understand the reasons for sustained adoption in this village, the social implications of technology adoption, and the reasons for lack of adoption in other villages, we began to understand the linkages, between technology

led sustainable development, self-governance, and equitable social change (Padmaja et al. 2006).

To overcome several constraints related to high costs of technology adoption, unavailability of some inputs, and skilled labour shortages, the peasants in the village gradually understood the importance of cooperation resulting in a breakdown of tradition exploitative and iniquitous social and political relations, and a build up of social capital. Further, once benefits began to flow from technology adoption in terms of increased productivity, income, and wages, it was observed that these benefits were more equitably distributed among and within households compared to earlier periods or to other villages. Such changes were linked to an explicit understanding on the part of male peasants and land owners that conventional farming practices were unsustainable and impoverishing, and that adoption of new technologies require significant social changes involving giving up discriminatory and exploitative practices. What was interesting was not just more equitable and less exploitative relations across castes and classes, but a greater empowerment of women in peasant and farming households reflected in a greater role in production and household decision making (Padmaja et al. 2006).

In the classic literature on technological change in India agriculture, the unwillingness of landed classes to adopt new technologies owing to a fear of changes in social and political relations arising from changes in production relations has been mentioned as a major reason for the persistence of a rentier economy and lack of technological dynamism in general (Desai et al. 1984). Where technological changes were introduced, social conflicts resulting from changed production relations and empowerment of the labouring classes and castes have not been infrequent. Hence, the need to combine technological change in the quest for sustainable development with social emancipation has to be understood and then implemented as part of a change strategy by those directly involved in such changes.

The case of Umra illustrates how social responsibilities were understood by farmers and peasants in their individual and household quests for welfare change, and how they were willing to give up long-standing conflicts, discriminatory practices, and share political power to achieve their objectives. Comparative studies in neighbouring villages where also the technology was introduced revealed very clearly that the inability of village households to overcome social conflicts and give up discriminatory practices prevented technology adoption.

Information Technology, political competition, and development in Warana

The Warana Wired Village Project was launched as a pilot project by the Information Technology Task Force of the Prime Minister's Office (India) in 1998 to demonstrate the use of IT infrastructure to accelerate socioeconomic development of a cluster of seventy villages around Warana river in the Kolhapur and Sangli districts of Maharashtra State. The Warana complex is an example of successful integrated rural development through cooperatives. The complex includes a total of twenty-five cooperative societies, among others for the production of sugar and dairy products, poultry, and financial credit. There are around 80 villages spread over the 25,000-sq. kilometer area covered by the co-operative. The major project objectives at the time of its launch in 1998 included: a) to utilize IT to increase the efficiency and productivity of existing cooperative societies b) to provide greater transparency in the working of cooperative societies c) to provide, agricultural, medical and educational information to villagers by establishing networked ' facilitation booths' in 70 villages d) to bring the world knowledge at the doorsteps of Warana through Internet e) to provide tele-education at both primary and higher level educational institutes, and f) to develop user friendly map based information systems for better administration.

Our study showed that many of the above objectives were not met, with the exception of objectives (a) and (b). However a survey of selected large village milk cooperatives where the project was extended and computers are used showed significant benefits. An increase in trust was a direct outcome of the introduction of computers in village dairy management. Especially for women, and non-literates, it increased the level of trust in the management, and was an important reason for some dairy farmers to shift to dairies with computers. This was not only because errors in measurement of milk quantity and quality were reduced but also corruption in terms of underpaying, under-measuring etc were eliminated. While political and caste affiliations are still dominant in influencing membership, for small and marginal farmers, landless labour, and women headed families, trust was very important in taking a decision regarding membership. We were also informed that some village cooperative dairies did not go in for computers since they didn't want transparency, as it would reduce their profits (individual and collective). For the Indian rural poor, for long used to exploitation, and discrimination, any technology that generates transparency, and de-personalizes operations, at once induced trust. In addition, because of the well known fact of competition among cooperatives in the state (Baviskar and Attwood, 1988), the institutions which stand to gain in terms of greater membership, political clout, and economic profits,

introduce such technologies to gain greater trust and support from its members or to wean away members from other cooperatives. As such, while each cooperative is lead by a dominant caste, attempts are made to woo other members irrespective of caste, class or gender. It was very evident from our surveys and interviews, that the poor, women, and landless especially flock to cooperative societies which promise greater profits, efficiency and transparency. The competition is quite unique to the state and was made possible because of an innovative legal provision. In most states in India, there can only be one cooperative per sector in a village. By allowing competition in cooperatives, the law allowed competition in local economic and political governance, thus making it imperative for local leaders and aspiring leaders to project themselves as democratic, transparent and supportive of marginalized groups. Thus on the one hand the introduction of information technology gradually led dairy farmers (especially women) to adopt better and more efficient practices to use local resources more efficiently and financially gain from milk production, but on the other, it also crucially led to social practices of inclusion, made possible by a specific governance mechanism of introducing competition into cooperatives.

Conclusion

The issues of scale and size are crucial to sustainable development. Appropriate governance structures which enable individuals and groups to act more responsibly towards nature and towards each other have been devised traditionally in the case of common pool resources. With the advent of capitalism and modernity, as the scale of production, distribution and consumption dramatically increased, governance mechanisms and structures also were transformed. The issue of responsibility is much more difficult to address at higher levels of aggregation. As the two cases illustrated above show, the issue of modernization interpreted as social emancipation and technological change need not contradict sustainable development objectives if we can conceive of decentralized development models and provide for self-governance at local levels. At larger levels, asking individuals to be responsible towards nature or towards other humans is quite abstract without tangible gains. At local levels however individuals and small groups at once grasp how they can address individual goals by behaving more responsibly. From this point of view, can one state that processes of economic liberalization and globalization, and large infrastructure projects are to be supported due to their modernizing effects, as some activists seem to argue? Based on Ambedkar's ideas of responsibility and his endorsement of the ancient Buddhist idea of the

sangha - small self-governing republics (Ambedkar 1987), one could argue with more conviction that Ambedkar as much as Gandhi believed in smallness of scale but with modern technological interventions as the path towards responsible governance and equitable development. It is this point of conjuncture that is the meeting point of Gandhi and Ambedkar in their seemingly ideologically different approaches to social emancipation and human progress.

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