

## **The Idea of India as an Ideal: Can our Dreams Come True?**

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

**I**T is indeed a great privilege and pleasure to be asked to give this year's Lakdawala Memorial Lecture. I had already given a lecture in memory of Prof. Lakdawala in Ahmedabad some years ago, and I was reluctant to give another this year. But I was persuaded to change my mind as this year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Institute of Social Sciences, which specializes in research and discussion on a very difficult but relevant area of our national life, viz. promotion of grass-roots democracy and prosperity. It is one of the few institutions in India to have made a mark in such a short time; and its work is recognized both at home and abroad. This lecture, therefore, is also an occasion for me to add my own tribute to the Institute.

I missed being a student of Prof. Lakdawala at the Bombay School of Economics. But I saw a great deal of him during the late fifties and early sixties at the meetings of the Panel of Economists at the Planning Commission. Lakdawala was among the last to speak

at such meetings. But he was listened to with respect because his words, few and understated as they were, were full of practical wisdom and often laced with subtle wit. From 1977 to 1982, we worked closely together when he was Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission and I was at the Reserve Bank. In the 1990s, after my return from London, I met him often and came to know what a great builder of institutions at the regional and national level he was. That is one reason why there are several memorial lectures in his honour.

In my earlier Lakdawala Memorial Lecture, I chose to speak on the Landscape of Economics, my chosen professional subject. This time, I propose to paint on an even wider canvas and reflect on 'the idea of India as an ideal.' Those of us like Prof. Lakdawala and myself who grew up in the decade or two before Independence had some definite views on what the freedom of India meant: what the idea of India stood for. Freedom for us was not a destination but a beginning, a necessary condition to create an India of our dreams. The India we cherished was not some reality, geographical or historical, and certainly not something rooted in the past or even in the present. It was the future that beckoned us. The flag we saluted was more like a flag-post: something to reach as soon as possible.

The idea, the ideal, the dream - if you like - was of course given to us by no less a person than Mahatma

Gandhi, by common universal consent, the greatest man that the twentieth century produced. That dream was to some extent modified and extended by Pandit Nehru, arguably the most charismatic and sensitive leader of that century. The two visions were largely coterminous. But there were some notable differences and the resultant dissonance in our minds and in the country has persisted and has influenced the course of our recent history. But consonant or not, Nehru was as much an author of our dreams as was Gandhiji.

Today, such is the cynicism and corruption in our society that it seems almost laughable even to speak of India as an ideal. But I honestly feel that our dreams are still relevant and can be realised to a great extent. The road map is clear by now. Not all has been black in our recent history. Without hope and the commitment to do whatever has to be done, nothing can happen. Dreams are never meant to be realised in full – they would cease to be dreams otherwise. But if we do not watch out, our dreams can turn into nightmares. We are at such a crossroads today. We can slowly drift into nightmarish chaos, or we can continue to march towards the goal with our heads held high. Both are possible. It is up to us to decide which road to take and what our future will be.

Both Gandhiji and Nehru wrote and spoke extensively. It is not easy to summarise what they taught us. But in the case of Gandhiji, I am helped by a play called 'Mahadevbhai', which I saw recently. It is a

remarkable play and I recommend that you see it with some younger members of your family if you get a chance. In that play, one actor acts out several episodes in Gandhiji's life as recorded in Mahadevbhai's diaries - like the Dandi march, for example. One episode depicts a Monday - Gandhiji's day of silence. Even on Monday, crowds came to see Gandhiji. They were not happy just to see him: they also wanted to hear his message. A method was devised to resolve the problem. Gandhiji would hold up one of his fingers, and one of his disciples would say what it stood for. His five fingers stood for: Hindu-Muslim unity, abolition of untouchability, equality of women, elimination of excesses like drunkenness or addiction to opium and finally, the Charkha. The fingers were held together by the wrist, which stood for non-violence.

I think it is permissible to enlarge on this metaphor of the hand and to interpret it to bring out its full significance. The crux of the matter is that it is the wrist of non-violence that nourishes and holds together everything else. One can perhaps add Truth as distinct from non-violence, as something which stands for openness, transparency and willingness to accept one's own mistakes and faults. Similarly, non-violence is not just absence of violence. Gandhiji was keenly aware that in a society as unequal and differentiated as ours, differences and conflict of interests were bound to arise and the bargaining power of different groups would seldom be equal. Non-violence meant that all

differences must be resolved by dialogue and discussion, by willingness to listen to and understand the other, with neither side feeling that it was humiliated or taken advantage of. There could be occasions when differences could not be resolved. It was possible then to resort to Satyagraha, which too had to be done in a non-confrontational manner and had to include self-punishment. Everything else followed from truth and non-violence so interpreted - democracy, rule of law, popular participation and amity among and equality across all divides - whether of caste, creed, race, gender, intellect, class or language and culture and region. That is what would mould the amorphous and multi-layered mass that was - and is - India into a common nationhood - not some garbled version of the past or a blind imitation of something which might exist somewhere in the present. Underlying all this was the conviction that means matter as much as ends. Both have to be pure and constructive. The best of ends achieved by corrupt or inappropriate means cannot endure, as that will generate resentment and reaction in one section or the other. The ends themselves will get corrupted.

The five fingers that the wrist holds should also be interpreted in a proper perspective. Hindu-Muslim unity stands for unity across all divides. The eradication of untouchability is not about atoning for or compensating for past injustice and cruelty. It is about abolishing current injustice and cruelty in all forms. It is also about the uplift of the weakest and the

most deprived - as indeed about their dignity and self-respect. The same thought underlies the advocacy of equality of women. But here, there was also the intention of unleashing the creative energies of half of India. Gandhiji, as we all know, had a special concern for women, and he has been most responsible for the high position many women enjoy in our social, political and economic life today. Similarly, simply emphasising prohibition does not do justice to Gandhiji's general insistence on moderation and restraint in all matters, and on austerity in both our personal and public lives. Austerity for Gandhiji was one of the pillars on which his economic vision for India stood.

The same applies to the charkha. It would be a travesty to reduce it to wearing khadi. The charkha stood for self-help, dignity of labour, decentralisation of economic activity, narrowing of the gap between cities and villages - and above all, for ending the enslavement and joylessness of ordinary people without property or skills, who had only their hard physical labour to sell as a means of meagre livelihood. Gandhiji was against capitalism in so far as the capitalist system concentrated the means of production in a few hands. He wanted everyone to own his own means of production - a concept much wider than the current notion of empowerment through education and the like. He was against socialism as it concentrated all means of production in the hands of the State, which led to the enslavement of everyone. If

everyone could have access to machinery, he was for it. Where large-scale production was inescapable as in the case of steel, he was for public ownership. If such a system of production was less efficient, so be it, for simple living is in any case desirable. But his system would be more equitable, and would give dignity and self-respect to even the poorest man and free him from the dependency syndrome. The inefficiency could also be modified to some extent if workers' cooperatives could be run by managers who acted as their trustees. Gandhiji did not perhaps outline his economic vision in the language of economics. But he had a clear vision of an economic system which encompassed every aspect of Indian society. We can ignore his vision only at our peril.

Where does Nehru fit into all this? I think we can all agree that Nehru would have no problem with Gandhiji's first three fingers of Hindu-Muslim unity, eradication of untouchability and equality of women. He would not quite preach austerity - but he too would revolt against ostentation, vulgar display of wealth and crude consumerism. As for non-violence, truth and the purity of means as well as ends, while Nehru may not have literally endorsed these ideals, he was in complete sympathy with their larger meaning as I have tried to analyse.

It is with regard to the economic system that Nehru departs most from Gandhiji. Nehru was not lacking in compassion or concern for the poor. But his

focus was on India's economic power – India marching shoulder to shoulder with more advanced countries in technical excellence. He was not much of a socialist; and his socialism, such as it was, was eclectic: Russia, Gandhi and the Fabian welfare state all went into his crucible, as indeed did his liking for at least some pioneers of private enterprise. It is with regard to the economic vision and the economic system that we most need some introspection today. The process of economic change has begun in India. But we do not quite know what it is leading to. It is a moot point whether it can or should take a Gandhian turn.

Nehru contributed three distinct elements to our vision of an ideal India: the inculcation of the scientific temper, the revival of our rich cultural and historical heritage, and our international outlook which sought to extend the idea of a rule of law to relations between nations and not just within nations. Gandhiji was not opposed to science or culture, or our international outlook. But these things were not central to his endeavour, whereas for Nehru they were almost the hallmark of his modernity and an integral part of his idea of India. We have much to be grateful for to Nehru in his own right and not just as a foil to Gandhiji.

Just imagine how lucky we have been to have as architects of our freedom movement two such towering personalities, who dared to think of the unthinkable about all aspects of life and had the gift of

articulating their ideas in a language even illiterate persons could understand. It went straight to our hearts and we knew instinctively that what we heard was worth taking to heart.

How does the history of the past 50 years and more compare with our dreams? One is almost ashamed to ask the question. We have strayed very far and the drift is accelerating rather than coming to a halt. That at least is the situation with regard to some parts of our dream. The hand that Mrs. Gandhi raised in 1969 as her symbol when the Congress party was split was not the hand of Gandhi, which proclaimed the sanctity of means as well as ends. It would not be much of a parody to state that the hand of Congress (I) has come to stand for: 'whatever ends I choose justify whatever means I choose to achieve them.' And that dictum has been embraced avidly by each party - national or regional. The result is progressive corruption and even criminalisation of our politics with little prospect for stable governments, which would govern with an eye to the future rather than pander to the current prejudices of the voters. A fractured polity has given rise to an inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy and the cancer has spread even to the judiciary. About the police, the other arm of law and order, the less said the better.

We all accepted Partition with a heavy heart but with the hope that when two estranged brothers separate, they may live in greater harmony thereafter.

That has not happened. Within the country, the distance between Hindus and Muslims has widened. Those who proclaim loudly to be secularists are concerned more with Muslim votes than with modern education for Muslim children, equality for Muslim women or acceptance of family planning by them as an essential means of self-improvement. After all, such ideas might cost them precious votes! Those who call others pseudo-secularists are at least not pseudo in one respect: they do not even hide their disrespect and hatred for our Muslim brothers and sisters. It is not any section of the Muslim community in India that continues to believe in the two nation theory; it is the Sangh Parivar, which has created in a small section of the Hindu majority the vicious feeling that the Muslims are virtually a separate nation that must be assimilated by force, if necessary, or else exported. And what can you say of those leaders who call themselves secularists but think nothing of widening all other divides - between caste and creed, language and region, culture and race? Competitive politics has not just been a game of populism and handouts and the creation of a dependency syndrome. It has also been a suicidal process of trying to be popular by dividing the country and creating a variety of fault-lines.

We have all the institutions of a democratic society - a constitution, elections, political parties, tomes of law, an active judiciary and so on. But we all know our democracy is flawed and somewhat in disarray. There is little enforcement of the rule of law

or adherence to equality of access to justice. Popular participation in discussions that affect the people is not what it should be. Atrocities against women and scheduled castes are not uncommon. There is much greater addiction today to drugs, liquor and the like, which breed violence, malnutrition and crime. To blame it all on prohibition would be to shut our eyes to reality – the situation is no better in states without prohibition. As for consumerism and vulgar display of wealth and ostentation, nobody even offers an apology for such behaviour today and no one shows displeasure by non-participation. Recent economic reform measures have certainly reduced the scope for corruption and have given much more freedom to consumers. But it is a moot point whether the current concern for the poor takes into account Gandhiji's main objective, which was to give the poorest person the joy and dignity of creative work in his own rural environment. Our notions of economic progress are still Nehruvian rather than Gandhian – emphasising grandeur and power over compassion and widespread participation. Acquiring nuclear bombs makes us feel good rather than sad. The idea of being the second or third largest economic power thrills us without anyone stopping to ask when the poorest man in India will be richer than the poorest in most other countries. There will always be poor people everywhere. Poverty is both an absolute and a relative concept. But in that ladder of the poor across nations, where will our poor stand?

I do not wish to go on with this sad tale of how far we have strayed from our dreams. My primary purpose is to argue that our record is not all that bad, that there are signs of hope, that there is also a road-map of what needs to be done and finally, that lack of outstanding success should not deter us. If the best is beyond our grasp, there is no reason why we should not strive for the good. If we do not do so, we may end up with the worst. I will now turn to this positive aspect of what I have to say – and I shall naturally be selective in dealing with such a vast subject.

Consider, for example, how often we have averted serious threats to national unity and integrity. The massacres that followed Partition could have easily spread around the country and destabilised the young republic. This was not allowed to happen and the Muslim community by and large was made to feel safe enough to stay on even in Northern India and not uproot itself in an effort to escape to Pakistan. Some did. But imagine what would have happened if the anger of the refugees had not been calmed by quick action to restore peace followed by an equally determined action to rehabilitate them generously. India could have been easily divided along the fault-line of the princely states. But this was prevented by the Sardar's firm and statesmanlike action, which did not alienate the princes. Thanks again to the Sardar, the steel frame of administration was kept intact.

In the late fifties, when regionalism and the linguistic divide raised their ugly heads, the spirit of discussion, dialogue, mutual accommodation and consensus prevailed again and the reorganisation of states was done peacefully. Today, in Bombay, the fear that the Gujaratis would be on the streets if Bombay was made the capital of Maharashtra seems ridiculous and the two communities live happily together with mutual advantage. But in 1958, this fear was all too real. The same is true of the division of Punjab. Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal have been created only recently – and we feel as if they have always existed. Who could have thought that the opposition to Hindi as the national language in the South could have been overcome by accepting English – a foreign language – as the second language for national discourse? It speaks volumes of the spirit of accommodation and forgiveness in the country – and it has paid off immensely in this age of globalisation. There are problems in Kashmir and the North-East, with attendant international complications. But there is increasing readiness to heal these festering wounds.

In our quest for rapid progress, we did make mistakes in the economic field initially. We indulged in a good deal of wishful thinking and wasted a tremendous amount of resources in pushing for rapid industrialisation including heavy industries. The regime of controls we created was counterproductive and led to a lot of corruption and loss of consumer choice. Much of nationalisation was driven not by

economics or even ideology but by electoral calculations. But with all that, the early era also laid some solid and sound foundations for future prosperity.

Panditji's insistence on setting up world-class institutions of higher learning in science, technology, agricultural research and management gave us the pillars on which our current success in a globalised world stands. The Petroleum Minister, Malaviyaji, was ridiculed for aspiring to a vibrant public sector oil industry. But that is a reality today and our hopes for energy security rest largely on the foundations laid then. Nationalisation of banks may have led to weakening of credit norms at the behest of corrupt politicians; but that single act did much to encourage financial savings among ordinary people and to make bank credit available to hitherto neglected sectors of the economy and society. Even today, I would plead for a sizeable presence of the public sector in finance and petroleum industries, albeit with much greater autonomy and even some induction of private equity in public enterprises.

I would not dwell on the virtual cultural Renaissance that the country has achieved, greatly assisted by public effort. Despite the remarkable growth of private entertainment and cable television, it is only Doordarshan which still gives a lot of time to education and culture uncluttered by idiotic advertisements; and many among us yearn for

something like the Public Broadcasting System of the US. I would actually go a step further and suggest that all television channels should be required to devote some time every day to cultural and educational programmes, with minimum encroachment of advertisements. If banks can be asked to devote a part of their credit to the priority sectors, what is so sacred about the media?

Let me turn to another area: the eradication of untouchability. We seldom stop to think how far this objective has been achieved. But it is a fact and we only have to look around to see it. It is true that there is still a good deal of violence against the scheduled castes in rural areas; but it is largely economically motivated and by castes only a shade higher in the social hierarchy. The credit for the widespread disappearance of untouchability goes entirely to the leaders of the scheduled castes themselves and to their supreme leader, Dr. Ambedkar. It is he who refused to look to the past but focussed instead on the future of his people. He had the foresight and wisdom to see that their future lay in education and not in self-imposed isolation from the mainstream of society. He was patriotic enough to work for a modern and united India and played a major part in devising a Constitution that would sustain his progressive vision. The community has wisely used the special treatment given to them. All political parties compete to claim them as their own, but they, by and large, keep their counsel, lift themselves up by self-help and education

and join the mainstream whenever they can do so without rancour, and seldom with a chip on their shoulder. Their example has much to teach other communities which are or consider themselves to be handicapped in some respects.

A mere man, I would not venture to speak on how far we have come with regard to equality of women. Perhaps a fair statement would be – some way, but not far. The trend, however, is for the better, thanks mainly to the efforts of various voluntary organisations. Credit facilities for women's self-help groups are an important element of this voluntary effort. Two things are necessary if the progress of women in India is to be more rapid: education of the girl child must receive the highest attention. And as my friend Swaminathan Anklesaria Iyer has rightly reminded us, assuring equal property rights to women is vital for their economic freedom, without which their other rights such as freedom from violence would always be insecure.

I would like to urge that the issue of women's rights should be taken out of the political agenda. Let us stop talking of the rights of Muslim women or the rights of Hindu women. That will inevitably set up a defensive reaction. God knows there is enough violence against women and violation of their dignity and self-respect in all communities and all classes. What is the difference between a girl-child who becomes a burden to be avoided at all cost because of

the dowry demands of in-laws, and a young woman covered from head to foot and denied fresh air and sunlight? As I see it, both deprive women of their essential dignity and freedom. But by communalising the issue for political reasons, we increase the resistance to change. This is particularly true when it comes to advocacy of family planning, so essential for the freedom of women. But if you use differences in fertility rates as something to accuse and attack a community with, in addition to hidden insinuations of ulterior motives, you only encourage resistance. Rather, it should be a matter of cold analysis and determined appeal to self-interest. My observation is that the ingrained prejudice against women has something to do with property rights and in communities where property rights for women are more secure, the female-male ratio is nearer the normal. My point is not to compare communities with the intention of praising or blaming. My plea is that it is possible to go behind outward manifestations and that it is necessary to do so if we want to bring about change.

While I think our past record is not all that black, I agree that much remains to be done; and I do not feel very sanguine about some parts of our dream. I particularly have in mind Hindu-Muslim unity, moderation or austerity in consumption, an international system based on the rule of law for everyone, and giving a Gandhian twist to the economic system. Even here, progress is possible and must be

attempted – and I will turn to this soon. But we may have to be patient and be satisfied in the end with a less than acceptable situation for the foreseeable future.

Before I turn to these specific areas, let me turn to some general points. If we want real progress, we should stop demonising particular groups or individuals and look more closely at the underlying systemic factors. Systems can be changed. Individuals and groups seldom change essentially – they only adjust to systems and circumstances. I shudder, for example, every time I hear that our Prime Minister is a very honest person, as if it is a special virtue. Are Prime Ministers not supposed to be personally honest? Have we not had honest Prime Ministers even in the recent past? Are Inder Kumar Gujral and Atal Bihari Vajpayee personally not honest? I for one never believed that any member of the Nehru-Gandhi family was – or is – personally dishonest. I have lived in and around politics now for some 50 years, and can honestly say that I have come across many honest, competent, conscientious, hard-working and patriotic politicians, civil servants and experts. If over time, some have learnt to be economical with truth, honesty and integrity, it is because of the rot in the political system, just as much of the corruption in the country was and still is the result of a faulty economic system. We have started modifying the economic system. It is time now to divert more attention to the political, administrative and legal systems. Laws are not enforced, justice is delayed and the corrupt and the

criminals go scot-free, with many of them even enjoying the highest positions in the land. Before we demonise any particular group or class we have to ask: how many times do we, ordinary citizens, have to resort to petty bribes or to using our influence with the authorities to get what is our due or to avoid undue harassment? It is not because we are dishonest. It is because we have no choice. And so the vicious circle goes on. Let us not forget that some of those who are accused of corruption today were once idealistic young disciples of leaders like Ram Manohar Lohia and Jay Prakash Narayan. It is the lure of power, compulsions of competitive politics and the general decline in moral standards that has made them the opposite of what they started as.

I am not an expert on politics, administration or law enforcement, and I do not want to propound solutions in these areas. I can only plead for concentrated attention on reform in all these areas. I do not subscribe to the view that politicians will not allow change as it might hurt their interests. They are shrewd enough to know when enough is enough and when their antics end up as zero-sum games. This situation has already arisen with regard to exploiting the secular or the caste cards. All parties have to now woo all communities. The same is the case with having to woo independents. If a consensus could be reached on how to tackle the so-called *aya rams* and *gaya rams*, it is surely possible to arrive at a consensus on what Governors should do in a situation of a hung or

fractured mandate. I think the power of independents to blackmail major parties can be curbed. A better system for financing elections can be devised. I am only giving a few examples; experts can suggest more far-reaching ones.

Again, on administration and law enforcement, one has to ask why civil servants have to have so much security against prosecution, why the vigilance machinery works so slowly as to be a mockery and why it is necessary to allow appeals in all cases that go on forever. Can there not be severe punishments or at least deterrence for not recording complaints, or for changing evidence and the like? No one is in favour of kangaroo courts, but some via media for ensuring speedier justice is necessary. And is it necessary for the highest court to declare someone a murderer or a blackmailer before he is denied high political position? It is time we stop condoning criminal behaviour in the name of natural justice. Again, an agreement on such issues should be possible.

The two other areas where we need systemic and far-reaching changes are education and economics. We have to raise our sights considerably with regard to universal education. It is no longer enough to talk of literacy or primary education. Emphasis has to shift to high quality. Everyone – boy or girl – should receive education up to the 12<sup>th</sup> standard, with good knowledge of English and Mathematics. Nothing less will serve the needs of our growing population in a

globalised world. We have to set our sights on the other end also. It is not enough to have one or two world-class institutions of higher education. We need several – including some in the social sciences. We need first class research laboratories for industries and universities, and as freestanding institutions. More imaginative partnership and coexistence of the public and private sectors will have to be evolved at all levels – including primary and secondary education. All this would mean a quantum jump in public and private expenditure on education. That is the main reason for the state selling off assets which can be better utilised by the private sector. It is also an important reason why we should strive ceaselessly for deriving a peace dividend from durable peace with all our neighbours.

As far as the economic system is concerned, the road map now is reasonably clear; and despite all the stops and starts, we will stay the course. The central theme of economic reform is competition and globalisation, without which none of our dreams can be realised. I firmly believe that most of our problems – including the social and political ones – will become easier to tackle if we can secure sustained high rates of growth for the next generation. Differences tend to dissolve in an environment of enlarging economic opportunities. That is the moral of U. S. history. That is what makes even the Dalai Lama plead for Tibet remaining a part of China. His disciples know which side offers them a better future.

Competition and globalisation are not enough. But they are absolutely indispensable. Everyone agrees that they have to be supplemented by universal education, access to credit for all, a sound legal system to enforce contracts and direct action to alleviate poverty and other social ills. Prosperity also requires a sense of private philanthropy to sustain it. But all this does not detract from the merits of competition and globalisation.

There is one aspect of globalisation which our Prime Minister rightly emphasises and it is often neglected in public discourse. We need to pay special attention to removing all barriers to trade and investment between ourselves and our neighbours, and to creating a free trade and investment area from Samarkand to Jakarta. I for one would also encourage movement of people to the maximum extent with easy work permits in the entire region. Apart from the economic impact, it will reduce much of the social and political tension that exists in our region. The same argument applies to China also. Peace, prosperity and people-to-people interaction go well together.

We should be under no illusion that with the implementation of economic reforms - a distant dream anyway - we would be among the richest countries in per capita terms in one generation. Nor will there be an end to poverty or any significant reduction in inequality. But we can give everyone *roti, kapada, makan, sadak, bijli*, sanitation, safe drinking water and

access to the literary treasures of the world, and eliminate malnutrition. That is a good enough dream to fulfil. Whether that means abolition of poverty or not will always remain a contentious subject as people raise the bar regarding what is the essential minimum for them. As for inequality, it might decline somewhat after a generation of good universal education and steady progress, but will not be eradicated. However, with full stomachs, a decent environment and proper education, people do not worry very much about what the other person has locked up in his vaults and bank accounts. Most people will be satisfied with a future for the working classes, about which Alfred Marshall, the doyen of British economics, wondered "whether progress may not go on steadily, till the official distinction between working man and gentleman has passed away, till, by occupation at least, every man is a gentleman."

The prospects are not bright for Gandhian notions of moderation, restraint and austerity. Human beings like to catch up with others and it is very easy to turn wants into needs. We have all experienced it and, like it or not, consumerism will prevail in India, by and large, as it has in the US and Europe. And yet, can anyone deny that Gandhiji's ideas in this regard are worth emphasising even more today? Savings and investments are vital for economic growth. Consumerism reduces savings – witness how the U.S. rate of saving is much lower than that of India, let alone China. Global warming may or may not be

around the corner. Science may stave off the exhaustion of scarce resources for some time. But we cannot be sure. Precaution demands restraint on consumption. Vulgar display is demeaning; it reduces social solidarity and, at times, even creates violent resentment. Part of the fuel that propels fundamentalism today is the disgust that many well-meaning but conventional people feel at the indulgence they see spreading all around them. There may or may not be a clash of civilisations. But there is certainly a clash in each society between inner peace and limitless gratification; between civilised, compassionate and moderate behaviour and a self-centered rat race, which leaves you little time even to enjoy what you crave for. There is sense in what a young Chinese student told me some 30 years ago: "We do not believe in keeping up with the Joneses. We believe in not having something if our neighbours do not have it." I know it would be difficult to find such a Chinese student today. But he is not irrelevant or wrong.

What about giving the economy a Gandhian twist as I defined it? Here again, the prospects are not bright, but much can and should be done. Today, development with a human face largely means hand-outs, guarantees and subsidies - all of which lead to waste and intensify the dependency syndrome. That was not Gandhiji's dream. He was for empowerment in a much more fundamental sense. He was for self-help and individual responsibility. Decentralisation of production may not be easy. But something needs to

be done to prevent the relentless march to urban slums. With today's technology and with rural electrification and technical training, it should be possible to carry jobs where people live and not vice versa. Even in cities, many jobs can now be done from homes and small localities. Technology can devise simple tools. I believe in Swadeshi to the extent that as far as possible we should patronise the wonderful arts and crafts in which we excel, and which give creative and meaningful employment to poor people. Call it cultural protection or what you like, but it matters. One reason for Japan's success in the early years was that it borrowed technology from everywhere but retained its own cultural consumption patterns. The success of China in exporting labour-intensive products goes back to Mao's insistence that every commune should have some industry of its own. The Chinese had enough sense to modernise its rural industry. Trusteeship may not be a workable concept, but it is possible to ensure workers' participation in management and have stock options for workers. The work environment can be more democratic and participatory. Those who think Gandhi is economically irrelevant are only refusing to think on new and bolder lines, and can find no alternative to traditional notions of socialism and capitalism. Institutions evolve, and it is possible to imagine and create an economy which combines the best of Marx, Mohandas and Milton Friedman - to stick only to the Ms.

I am afraid I am not very sanguine about Gandhiji's first finger: Hindu-Muslim unity. It would take quite a while before his dream is realised. The past, particularly the recent past, is against us. I doubt if there ever was as much cultural synthesis and normal social discourse between these two communities as is often suggested – except perhaps in U.P. and around Delhi. Social and cultural isolation was a reality even in my childhood. Today, the isolation is almost complete. What was true and can still be true is peaceful coexistence and economic interdependence. In time, these will bring about greater warmth and normalcy in cultural and social relations. But much will have to be done by both communities if this is to happen. Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists will have to be fought and thwarted at all levels, and the law must be strictly enforced against all miscreants. If governments are unwilling to do this, NGOs must receive our wholehearted support in this task. Recent events give us hope that this can be done. I have every confidence that there is enough wisdom in the majority community to fight the communal passion instilled in some of them. Muslim society must find a path to modernity. Madrassas and burkhas are not the way forward. One only hopes that some Dr. Ambedkar among the Muslims will come forward to do what needs to be done in the interests of everyone. The media too should not inflame communal passions. It is possible to report facts without always talking of Hindus and Muslims. The economic ties between them

are still strong and there is realisation that violence hurts both communities, particularly the poorest families who live on their daily earnings. The ordinary Gujarati understands this. After all, there were no significant communal riots in Gujarat for almost a decade before 2002 – and for most of this time, the BJP was in power. With patience and persistence on the right path, even this dream of Gandhiji will come true. But it will take some time.

Can peace with Pakistan help? To some extent yes, but not much. Both have to be dealt with on their own terms and both are important in their own right. The road map for peace with Pakistan is already there and both sides have travelled some distance on that. The groundswell of public support for peace in both countries is real. I think the solution to Kashmir is also not difficult to find. Any solution must be acceptable to some extent to Pakistan, India and the people of Kashmir on both sides of the line of control. Each must feel it has got something, but not everything. I think our Prime Minister was right when he drew the bottomline: we cannot have another partition of India and Kashmir should not be divided on religious lines. I can see only one solution along these lines: the present line of control as the international boundary, with some adjustments, if necessary, and the creation of an autonomous region of Kashmir around some part of the international boundary, including parts of Kashmir on both sides of the border. The unity and autonomy of Kashmiris would be respected. It is absolutely

necessary that this autonomous region include both Jammu and the Kashmir valley even if Ladakh and the northern regions in Pakistan are left out. Kashmiriat may have suffered a severe jolt. But everything must be done to revive it. Once such an autonomous but not independent region is agreed upon, minor adjustments in the international border will not matter. Both Pakistan and India should have no real problem with such a solution, for which even L. K. Advani can work with Manmohan Singh. I know the fear of creating a precedent. All I can say is that no one can predict what can happen in future. The present cannot be held hostage to fears about the future. If a similar situation arises in the future, it will have to be dealt with in its own context.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have left Nehru far behind and must return to him briefly before I end. The future is bright for his concerns, for the scientific temper of the nation and for cultural revival. As for his dream of a powerful India in the frontline of the nations of the world, I am more impressed by Gandhi. I was not happy when we acquired nuclear weapons. It has served no purpose; on the contrary, it has worsened matters. I would support the suggestion of my friend Jagat Mehta that as a part of the peace process, India and Pakistan should destroy their nuclear weapons and accept international supervision of their nuclear facilities. It is ridiculous to think that we need nuclear weapons as a defence against China.

I have some reservations with regard to India's membership of the Security Council also. If there are to be more than five permanent members, our claim is clear and we should not forsake it. But I would not spend much diplomatic capital on obtaining such a position. Similarly, on the veto - if other permanent members are to have it, we should have it too. But we should declare that we will surrender our veto if a majority of the other members are willing to do the same. After all, we are against all aristocracy in international affairs as we are for total nuclear disarmament. There is no other moral or Gandhian position.

I am not sanguine about the rule of law prevailing in international affairs. Power - economic and military - will still speak. But the point is that we are committed to containing power in the interests of what is right. Our commitment is to the poor and the powerless of the world. And I dare to say that we have succeeded a great deal in restraining power in the World Bank, IMF, WTO and even in the UN. But we cannot have it both ways - we cannot pretend to fight the rich and the powerful and seek to join them at the same time. I am glad we have had to give up the ambition of becoming leaders in the international arena - whether of the non-aligned movement or of the South. Let us not dream now of joining some other axis of power. Our international *dharma* has to be friendship and cooperation with all, and the

democratisation of international institutions to the maximum extent possible.

I apologise for such a long and essentially subjective discourse, and I am grateful to you for giving me such a patient hearing. The last time I gave a memorial lecture in Delhi was in 1993, and you will forgive me for wanting to make the most of this opportunity. Once again, I extend my best wishes to the Institute of Social Sciences, whose twentieth birthday we are celebrating, and express my gratitude to them for inviting me here today to join in their celebrations. Thank you.

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