

# Gandhi: An Integration of Economics and Politics

by Kamal Quadir

THE West romanticized Gandhi into a naked 'fakir' who did mystical things that the West did not understand. In reality, Gandhi's activities were very logical and calculated. His innovative ideas helped to end the British rule in India and revived the Indian economic structure. Among Gandhi's many steps in the nationalist movement, he considered both the spinning wheel and cow protection to be crucial for India's future. Through from the economic view the results of spinning were more obvious for the anti-colonial nationalist movement, cow protection played a significant role in India's rural life. However, both spinning and cow protection were successful in demonstrating that India could be self-sufficient to its needs. In this discussion I will analyze the factors that persuaded Gandhi to choose these two steps and will also show how influential, necessary and persuasive these steps were for colonized India to change its economic and social condition along with drawing the mass to the nationalist movement.

During British colonization the Indian economy was based on agriculture. While there were some industrial cities, Western industrialization had not yet affected a significant number of India's population. Nearly 87 per cent of Indians' occupations were related to agriculture. Gandhi realized that western industrialization would neither be appropriate nor be suitable for a country like India. Gandhi focused upon the cotton industry because at that time India stood second in world cotton production (The Encyclopedia Britannica, v.15, p.393, New York, 1911); in the second place, it was the easiest, the cheapest and the only cottage industry that was available to the greater population. Besides, cotton was one of India's fundamental needs because in India it was the only source of making cloth. Gandhi also observed that India's cotton industry was flourishing and commanding the world market until the eighteenth century. (Since the British colonization, deliberate steps were taken by the administration to destroy the native textile industries of the people in order to

capture the Indian market for British manufacturers. Consequently, by the next century India became the largest market for the Lancashire cotton industries.) Therefore, Gandhi decided that his job would be to revive the cotton industry that was killed by the British.

Though India was entirely dependent on agriculture, agriculture itself was inefficient to yield a real living. The majority of the cultivators were dependent on the cotton or jute industry to supplement their otherwise meager income. Therefore, by reviving the cotton industry, Gandhi not only helped the cultivators to become self-sufficient of their cloths but also helped them to have one additional source of income. India's agriculture was totally dependent on the seasons. During the monsoon and dry seasons, cultivators were forced to remain at home at least for four months. The seasonal conditions, the normal dryness of the soil and the enforced idleness made agriculture an insecure occupation for a cultivator to depend on alone. Spinning provided them the supplementary employment for their idle time. Spinning brought back occupations those were allied to it, for example, dyeing, weaving, printing, carding, etc. Gandhi also observed that before foreign cloth came to India people used to weave their own cloth and they used to spend their spare time on spinning. Since India became entirely dependent upon foreign cloth, villagers spent their time idly instead industrially. On the one hand to get foreign cloth India drained millions of rupees for importation, on the other hand foreign cloth made people's living an idle life. Consequently, the poverty increased. Therefore, the only way it could be prevented was to distribute the work and assets through India's villages and that was imaginable through the revival of the spinning and weaving industries. Along with socio-economic changes, spinning provided a sense of self-possession which developed out of complete rejection of machinery and alien domination.

India's agriculture was based on cows. Functions that were performed in Western countries by gas, coal,

petroleum and electricity were performed in India by cows. For example, cows used to plough the fields, draw cart, more grinders of mortar and oil seeds. It was utterly impossible to imagine cultivation in India without the cow. Gandhi realized that the stability of the country which was entirely dependent on agriculture, would be seriously threatened if cows were not protected. Cow's milk, apart from its ordinary use, was converted into numerous food products used daily in every home. In India, especially places where people were mostly vegetarian were used to get their neces-

sponsibility towards each other between the two communities. His approach concerning cow protection showed a proper understanding of Indian agriculture and social context.

Gandhi felt that only after taking Swadeshi and cow protection as religious principles it would be possible to convince millions to follow those. In the West though Gandhi's spinning wheel might be seen as a tool of alienation and the Swadeshi movement might be regarded as a boycott of the West, the Swadeshi movement should not be considered, as it is

the verge of starvation. Then it would be the aim of the Swadeshi to use what was only produced in India and renounce all foreign goods in the interest of the millions who were starving. "Cow protection," he said from his idea of non-violence, "means brotherhood between man and beast." (My Religion; M K Gandhi, p.147, Navajivan). This was a recognition of the great Hindu belief in the unity of life, therefore our kinship with all living things. By converting both spinning and cow protection as religious principles from general activities Gandhi not only got success in these two strategies but also brought a moral obligation to people to serve their country.

The extent of importance the spinning had gained in India's economy could be seen from the fact that in 1913 India imported, from Great Britain 17,719 metric tons of cotton yarn and thread, in 1925, only 7,992 metric tons were imported instead. In 1913 India imported 253,456 metric tons of cotton piece goods while in 1925 the import was only 122,213 metric tons (The Accountant, London, Feb 4, 1928). At that time the British economist, Prof J H Jones of Leeds, wrote concerning the cotton industries of Lancashire: "... imports of cotton manufactures into Asia not only from Great Britain but also from other countries have fallen ... the heaviest absolute fall in exports has taken place in the trade with India." (The Accountant, London, Feb 4, 1928)

Spinning not only achieved its economic aspect but it also symbolically united the whole of India. Hindus, Muslims, Untouchables, Christians, Parsis, Sikhs in fact every one who spun had a common identity — Spinner of Swadeshi. Spinning tool — *charkha* was a rural element which belongs to India's rural culture and therefore, the most spinning was happening in villages. Consequently rural people became cautious about their political rights and became aware about how they were exploited. The strategy of spinning was successful economically, socially and politically.

Gandhi observed that the cow was not as responsible as it was known to for the Hindu-Muslim riots. His

writings make it clear that he did not consider cow worshiping as a great factor in the friction between the two religions. Instead he observed that both Hindus and Muslims respected the cow and appreciated its virtues. Both communities saw the cow as an element of their religion. Muslims used to sacrifice it towards God as a homage that they were sacrificing something for Him which they were very fond of. There was nothing to offend other religions through this act. Muslim scholars explained that neither the written tenets of Islam nor tradition enjoined the slaughter of cow. For example, in Turkey, Egypt and Persia, where a cow might be sacrificed without least offense to any one, people preferred sheep to sacrifice. History shows that riots had always occurred in cities where only seven per cent of India's population lived. Millions of followers of these two religions have been living peacefully in rural areas for centuries. History also shows that cow slaughtering was banned in Delhi from the time of Moghul emperor Akbar until 1857 when the British came to power. By withdrawing the cow slaughtering law the British administration offended the Hindu community and also created a distrust between Hindus and Muslims. This incident exposes the fact that the administration manipulated the differences between Hindus and Muslims for their own selfish needs. Some riots had occurred for administrative failure instead of Hindu-Muslim religious differences. Therefore, by taking cow protection as a religious principle both the Hindus and Muslims could unite themselves regardless of their religious beliefs.

After analyzing the spinning and cow protection it is clear that Gandhi's both steps were well pondered and crucially influential for India in the nationalist movement. At the moment when the country was baffled with Hindu-Muslim riots, Gandhi came with the solution of cow protection. His idea of spinning which had sown the seed for India's textile industries, achieved the best results. Independent India's textile industry is the second in production in the world.



sary protein from these kinds of foods. Cowdung was used as a source of fuel and fertilizer. Importance and necessities of cows were acknowledged both by the Hindu and the Muslim communities. Advantages of having cows were also enjoyed by both the communities. Gandhi observed that though cow was known as one of the major elements that split apart the Hindu and the Muslim communities, it was also one of the few things that was shared by both the communities. Therefore, by protecting cows symbolically Gandhi established a sense of re-

sponsibility towards each other between the two communities. His approach concerning cow protection showed a proper understanding of Indian agriculture and social context. Gandhi felt that only after taking Swadeshi and cow protection as religious principles it would be possible to convince millions to follow those. In the West though Gandhi's spinning wheel might be seen as a tool of alienation and the Swadeshi movement might be regarded as a boycott of the West, the Swadeshi movement should not be considered, as it is

## ENTERTAINMENT

### Singing Restaurant

by Kaiser Parvez Ali

I had the opportunity to visit numerous restaurants around the globe, but never had I visited one, where all the staff keep on singing to entertain the diners. But of late, I had an opportunity to visit one in Manila.

During my training there, we the participants were invited by our hosts to a dinner at the popular IHAW IHAW restaurant located in downtown Manila. As we arrived we could hear the loud Filipino music coming from

were wooden. Musicians with Mexican hats and Filipino dresses played loud Filipino music, the waiters meanwhile were singing in Tagalog, the Filipino language, then it was the turn of the waitresses, guards, and finally the cooks. All of them while singing were smiling and were in good spirits. With the cooks singing songs made us a little worried, but we saw as soon as they finished singing, they rushed to the kitchen to prepare the food. The atmo-



inside. We were greeted at the gate and taken inside we found the ground floor of the restaurant completely full. As there was reservation for us, we found our seats on the first floor. Both the floors of the restaurant had the decorations of the Filipino countryside. There were fresh fruits such as banana and the pineapples with their plants, aligned on the colourful walls. On the dining table, banana leaves were placed as mats. The utensils and cutlery such as the plate and spoon

very lively, and the charged environment compelled us to click our cameras with the restaurant staff-cum-singers. While some were serving of the food the music and the songs were being performed, continuously, by some of the roving waiters and waitresses.

My visit to IHAW IHAW restaurant was really a memorable and entertaining one and will always be. So, I believe, to many, who might visit it.

### Viewing Video

by Lenin Gani

OPERATION Dumbo Drop follows the hilarious adventures of a group of US army soldiers led by Danny Glover and Ray Liotta whose task it is to deliver an elephant to a village somewhere in South Vietnam at the height of the war in 1968. The villagers lost their previous one six years earlier when attacked by Vietnamese troops.

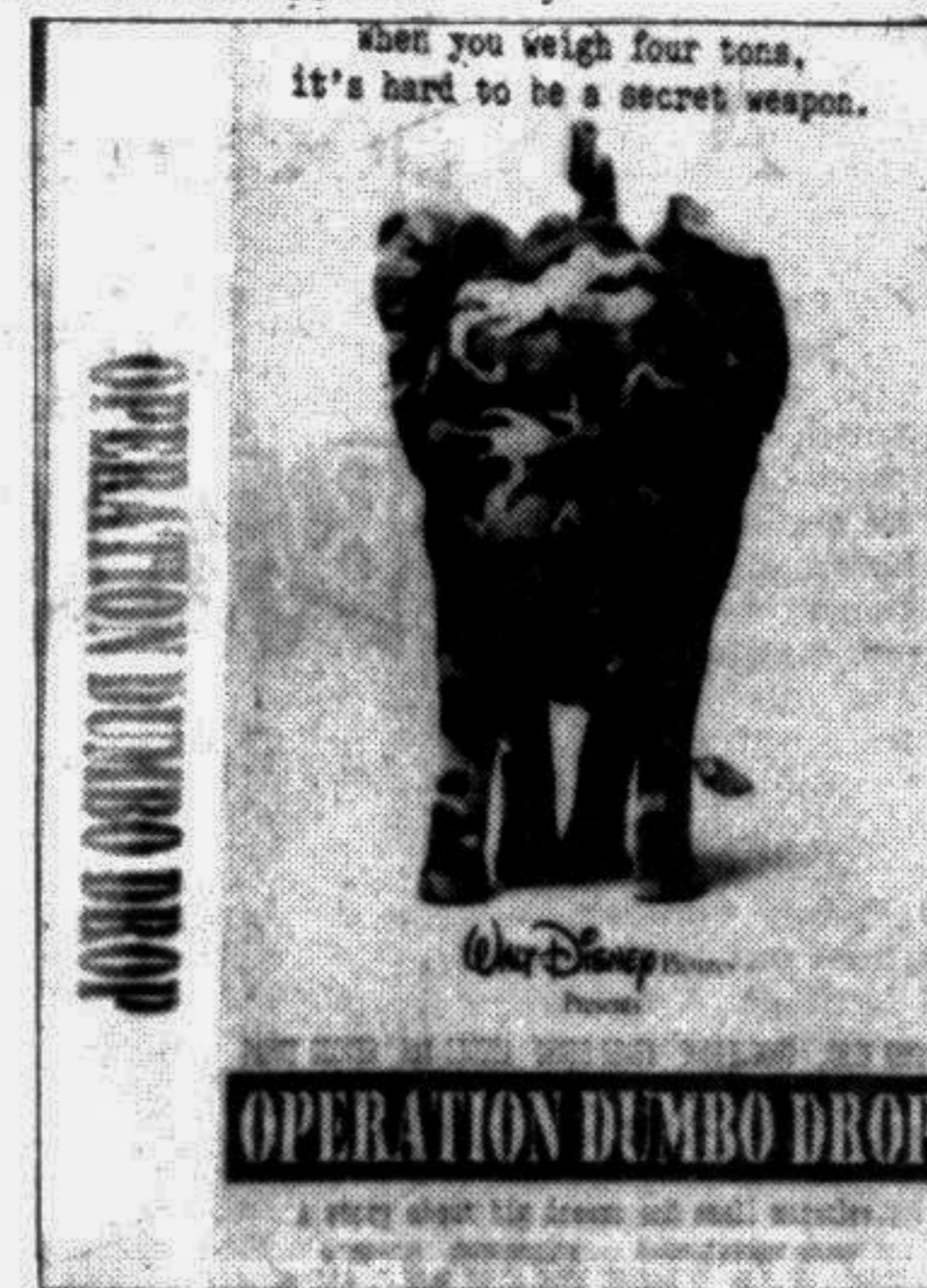
The task is indeed a herculean one and is not helped by bureaucratic red-tape. Seeing how the army is not so obliging, Danny and Ray decide to do it themselves unaided putting aside their own personal differences. Now the fun begins. There is the episode aboard the plane, run through the marketplace, boat chase and most spectacular of all the actual parachute drop itself.

Disney deserves apprecia-

tion for adapting this true story using all their familiar techniques.

Love knows no boundaries even if it is between a human and an animal. That's exactly the case in *Andre* the true story of an orphaned seal that is adopted by a small-town family and gradually develops a special relationship with the youngest daughter Toni (Tina Majorino). Her fathers (Keith Carradine), the local harbour master, seeing how Toni is becoming attached to Andre, not to mention the fact he is now the cause of friction within the whole family, decides to release him into the ocean but each summer for the next 24 years he returns.

This heart-warming tale will certainly provide also an education for the whole family.



ENGLISH		
NAME	TYPE	CAST
1. Johnny Mnemonic	(Sci-Fi/Thriller)	Keanu Reeves/Dolph Lundgren/Henry Rollins
2. Twisted Love	(Murder/Thriller)	Lisa Dean/Ryan/Mark Paul Grosselaar
3. Destiny Turns on the Radio	(Comedy)	James Le Gros/James Belushi/Quentin Tarantino
4. The Scent of Green Papaya (1993 Cannes Film Festival winner)	(Drama)	
5. Snow Bunnies (Nerds on vacation)	(Comedy)	Dean Cameron
6. Man in the Grey Flannel Suit	(Drama)	Gregory Peck/Jennifer Jones
7. Alexander Nevsky	(Drama)	John Hurt/Raul Julia
8. Frankenstein Unbound-2	(Horror)	John Hurt/Raul Julia
9. Dracula	(Horror)	Frank Lagros/Donald Pleasance
10. The Year of Living Dangerously	(Political)	Mel Gibson/Sigourney Weaver
11. Free Willy Returns	(Adv)	
12. The WWF's Most Unusual Matches	(Wrestling)	

Source: Film Fair Video and other clubs.

## MUSIC

### All Africa is Dancing to the Kwasa Kwasa

Elias Nyakutemba writes from Lusaka

One of Africa's oldest music forms, rhumba, and its popular dance style, *kwasa kwasa*, are going through rapid change as musicians add new flavours to them. And the old African kings and queens of the dance floor are finding the new hip twisting dances too hot.



But the new *kwasa kwasa* musicians are keen on expanding the market. Old and well respected rhumba maestros like Tabuley Seigneur Rochereau, new kings like Koffi Olomide and exciting groups like Soukouss Stars are all breaking new ground in the war against language as a musical barrier.

Soukouss's new album *In Hollywood* is a typical example. The song *Robin Pretty* mixes language up: "Mame mame mame (mother, mother, mother), Robin, Robin, keep me, I need you," it says, before plunging into exactly the same message in Lingala — the story of a man in love who wants his nagging family to back off and let him marry Robin (perhaps a foreigner or a woman of a different tribe).

And the trick seems to be working. A lot of *kwasa kwasa* now finds its way into American, European and even Japanese nightclubs, according to Olomide. "We have hit gold, the music is spreading," he says. But international success brings other problems. "We have a real headache as a result," Olomide says. "Music piracy has

reached the peak and it's hard to imagine any African musician becoming a millionaire."

High technology enables hundreds of illegal music studios to dub from stolen master music cards (the plate used to produce the artist's original audio). In that way thousands of cassettes or albums are pirated for distribution across Africa and beyond. The poor policing or complete absence of copyright laws in most African countries is not helping the war on music piracy.

Olomide estimates that tens of millions of US dollars are realised each year from music piracy of *kwasa kwasa*. In Africa thousands of youths in many countries live solely on selling pirated music to eager customers.

"What we get is popularity because everyone is playing our music, but unless they stop buying pirated music, we will continue losing millions of US dollars. It's a sad situation," he says.

On that, even old Paulino Jamba agrees: "*Kwasa kwasa* is changing too fast. It will dominate Africa and perhaps some parts of the other continents in the near future. It, however, needs careful planning and a foolproof regulatory system to become a major foreign exchange earner, like in Europe or America." — GEMINI NEWS

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A scene from popular TV serial Star Trek

IS Africa's newest dance craze really that new? Is *kwasa kwasa* really the freshest step from the world's most smooth-moving continent or is it just a jumped-up version of what the old African dance floor timers used to know as rhumba?

Sometimes the arguments rage quite fiercely, but they do not last long. When the music starts up the people, young and old, know it is time to shut up and dance — that is, if you know how.

Let us imagine that the band on the floor is Arlus Mabele's popular Locketo group from Zaire and they are playing their latest hip-twister number, *Alina*. The old folks would probably waltz for 30-40 seconds in the old rhumba fashion and leave it at that — which is probably wise.

The words of the song *Mama e mawa* come on in short, straight bursts and the acoustic and lead guitars suddenly move into high tempo taking the dancing crowd through several beat twists and turns.

"There is simply no time, no time at all," says Zambian music columnist Richard Mwanza, "to stick together once the vibe clicks. What happens next is so music soothing that nobody cares about gym exercises any more."

Some dancers try the hip-twist for starters — move one leg inwards and the other outwards and shift from on to the other, using only your hips while the torso and arms remain relatively immobile. The kite is a variation on that as the arms take turns, swinging and down while the torso heaves either back and forth or sideways at incredible speed.

Even more intriguing are styles like whirlwind and frog-trot. The first requires the dancer to shift the body weight onto one leg and turn full circle several times while the other leg keeps stamping hard on the ground to provide the necessary push in unison with the beat. Too easy for you?

Then go down on your haunches and squat like a frog does. Then you move your hands up and half-way forward, slightly bent at the elbows, and set off trotting across the floor, swinging your arms and torso until the ache in your back is too much to bear.

It something really hot is playing, like Madilu System's *Pimboyo*, you can get up and do the wasp-quiver — with both feet glued to the ground, vibrate your whole body, at near-wasp speed levels, all the time staying in step with the tune.

Says Mwanza: "In a single song you have now up to 10 dancing paces and the beauty is that you can all go home shower and sleep like a baby. You wake up and feel fresh for all the work you care to do."

Now is that really the way it was in the old days? "In the 50s, 60s, and 70s," Paulino Jamba (75) remembers, "rhumba sent us to the floor in twos, we clung to the opposite sex like a leech to a cow skin and we just rolled on slowly, softly into a world of our own, no sweat."

But many old folks who frequent mushrooming night spots from Nairobi to Harare, and from Luanda to Accra say there is little that is new about the new *kwasa kwasa*