

Industrialise (And -



Mahatma Gandhi (1869 - 1948)

Mahatma Gandhi was a revolutionary and an architect of Free India. Sir M. Visvesvaraya on the other hand was an architect of modern India and a practical man to the core. Though both had the same objective of achieving not only political independence but also economic and social independence, they had diametrically opposite views. Gandhiji was all for non violence

Or) ?

Perish

and against the reckless use of science and machinery while Sir M.Visvesvaraya was a great admirer of science, technology, heavy machinery and heavy industries. A peep into the contrasting characters of these two great personalities whose birth anniversaries fall within a gap of 15 days every year. Mahatma Gandhi October 2nd - Sir.M.Visvesvaraya September 15th.

■ G.P. Vinayababu



Sir. M. Visvesvaraya (1860 - 1961)

I detest the unpardonable slaughter of innocent life in the name of 'Science' and all the scientific discoveries stained with innocent blood I count as of no consequence.

Mahatma Gandhi

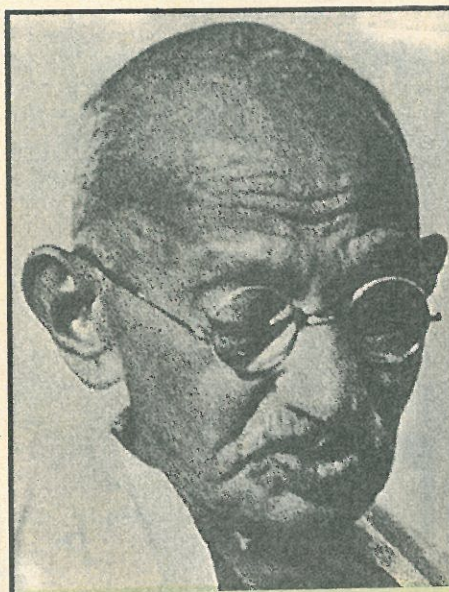
Science is a rising force; it is creating a new world about us, and needs to be watched and pressed into service and in any case it would be courting disaster to ignore it.

Sir M. Visvesvaraya

The statements made by these two great sons of India, who spent all their lives in the service of the country, bring about a sharp contrast in their perception of science and its usefulness.

Mahatma Gandhi and Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya dared to differ in their ideologies. But their ultimate aim was the same, of rendering service to the development of humanity.

Mahatma Gandhi had very strong views on the role of machines and heavy industries in the prosperity of Indian economy. He said 'The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man'. And further he said 'I would not weep over the disappearance of machinery or consider it a calamity'. He had reason to be antagonistic towards machines. He was all for the development of villages which constituted more than 80 per cent of India's population. His prime concern was to provide employment to all the lesser fortunate people. This made him oppose machinery, which he felt would deprive the masses of their occupation and source of income. 'Mechanisation is good when hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil where there are more hands than required as is the case with India. But his opposition to power driven machinery was not a blind one nor was he against all machinery. 'How can I be against all machinery when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning wheel itself is a machine. What I object to is a craze for machinery as such. The craze is for what they call 'labour saving' machinery. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the back of



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millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed'.

In complete opposition to this, Sir M. Visvesvaraya was a great admirer of science and technology. He emphasised the need to establish large industries. He insisted on setting up munition factories, shipyards, aircraft and automobile factories and the like. To Sir M. Visvesvaraya, automobile stood for speed, progress and prosperity. He stressed the importance of machinery in the defence of the country. He wanted India to present a bold front and show the world that it could fight anybody. His views on modern industries are worth mentioning here. "Without modern industries to produce commodities, without modern machinery and tools to increase production, without engines for transport and munitions for defence, this country will remain crippled and stationery while other

countries will be forging ahead.'

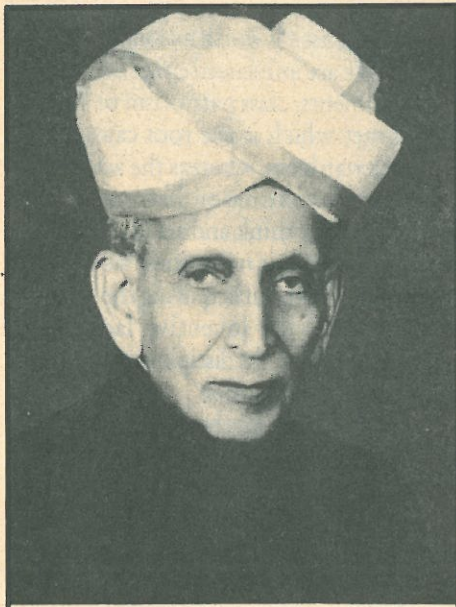
Sir M. Visvesvaraya gave the clarion call 'Industrialise or Perish'. In total opposition to this, Gandhiji's writings have been published under the title "Industrialise and Perish".

Gandhiji had such a strong influence on the minds of the people of India that all leaders who believed that the economic salvation of India lies in the development of modern industry came to accept the ideology of ruralisation of Gandhiji whole heartedly. That was the impact of Gandhiji on the minds of people.

All the methods he adopted in fighting the British were novel and unique. Be it nonviolence, satyagraha, use of spinning wheel or his identification with the poorest of the poor, he had his own unique ways. So it was quite natural for those leaders who believed that the modern industry is the only solution to Indian problems to accept Gandhiji's ideas of small scale industries and ruralisation.

But Sir M. Visvesvaraya would have none of these while having the greatest respect for Gandhiji. He said Gandhiji was also in favour of heavy industries but his emphasis on Khadi gave a different impression.

The incident which happened at the first khadi exhibition held in Bangalore clearly revealed the difference in the outlook of the two. When Sir M. Visvesvaraya paid a visit to the exhibition, the organisers including the first Governor General of free India, Rajagopalchari escorted him through the exhibition. He was delighted with the charts that were displayed and was particularly impressed with a chart showing how every pie of the rupee got itself distributed among the village people. He questioned them on the quantity of yarn that was being produced by the spinning wheel and was totally disappointed by their answer. 'All that quantity would be produced in less than a month's time by a spinning mill with the least expenditure of human energy' he said. On the other chart he read the words "India is a land of villages". To many it sounded a universal fact. But Sir M. Visvesvaraya interrogated 'should India always remain a land of



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villages?’

Gandhiji was a strong believer of swadeshi ideals. For him khadi was the ultimate symbol of protecting India's self esteem and 'Charkha' the symbol of self dependency. He vehemently opposed the use of foreign goods. To Gandhiji Swadeshi meant the use of all home made things. Gandhiji's principle of self control and his strong swadeshi leanings meant that he

would forego certain things which were considered necessities for a decent living. He wasn't using pins, pencils, pens and paper because they were not being manufactured in our country. He used only hand pounded rice and wheat and he gave up sugar and use of soap as they were expensive propositions. He would use a country made razor for shaving because safety razors were not manufactured in India then. He wouldn't wear tailor made clothes. He wore handspun and hand-woven khadi, spun by himself.

Gandhiji would exhort his country men to consign foreign goods to flames which they would do most happily. Such acts serve two purposes. One the opposition to British rule and second urging Indians to be self-reliant.

Sir M. Visvesvaraya was no lesser in his swadeshi practices, only that it was totally different from the way Gandhiji did it. When the Indian government decided to import war requirements, machinery and ammunition, Sir M. Visvesvaraya protested against it saying Indian industry has to be developed first and it was not right to import such strategic items from other countries. He urged the government to provide patronage instead of resorting to imports.

Innumerable instances of him favouring self reliance and self sufficiency are available. In the construction of Krishnarajasagar Dam across the Cauvery river in Mysore, not a single ounce of cement was used as cement was not manufactured in India then. The whole dam was constructed using only 'Surkhi' mortar - mixture of lime sand and brick in definite proportions thus saving

Achievements - Sir M. Visvesvaraya

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| 1891 | - Established Deccan Club at Pune |
| 1899 | - Designed a new system of automatic waste weir flood gate |
| 1901 | - Introduced the block system of irrigation |
| 1909 | - Prepared a scheme for flood protection work and underground drainage for Hyderabad city |
| 1913 | - Started the State Bank of Mysore |
| 1914 | - Started Mechanical Engineering School at Bangalore |
| 1916 | - Established Mysore University and the State Engineering College in Bangalore |
| 1918 | - Approved the plan to establish Bhadravathi Iron & Steel Works and a number of other industries |
| 1927 | - Designed and constructed Krishnasagar Reservoir. Public Libraries were established in Bangalore and Mysore |
| 1936 | - Automobile Industry Plan was prepared |
| 1941 | - Establishment of All India Manufacturers' Organisation, & was President from 1941-1954 |
| 1942 | - Started Sri Jayachamarajendra Polytechnic at Bangalore |
| 1952 | - Selected the proper site for a new railway bridge to river Ganga in Bihar |
| 1912-1918 | - Devan of Mysore |

huge expenditure in importing costly cement. This is ingenuity and patriotism of Sir M. Visvesvaraya for you.

But personally he wasn't opposed to using foreign goods. He wanted quality irrespective of their origin. He even abhorred the opposition to foreign goods merely because it was foreign which even Gandhiji came to agree later on. Gandhiji had said, 'To reject foreign manufactures just because they are foreign is a negation of swadeshi spirit'.

Though Sir M. Visvesvaraya was a great patriot and a committed swadeshi, he wanted machine tools to be imported to manufacture other basic machinery. Sir M. Visvesvaraya was an admirer of western

civilisation as westerners harnessed the fruits of science and technology most effectively.

In sharp contrast to the khadi clad Gandhi, Sir M. Visvesvaraya used to be immaculately dressed.

Both Gandhiji and Sir M. Visvesvaraya mutually respected each other. He climbed down from his stand of only supporting the concept of heavy industries, by approving the spinning wheel as the means to provide mass employment till a substitute was found.

Even though Sir M. Visvesvaraya belonged to a divergent school of thought, Gandhiji wanted him to be an adviser on the 'All India Village Industries Association' conceived by him. While rejecting the offer of being an adviser on the board, Sir M. Visvesvaraya offered himself for any advice or guidance which the association sought from him.

Gandhiji though perturbed by the rejection of the offer wrote to Sir M. Visvesvaraya thus, "I entertain great regard for your fine abilities, and that shall

be unabated whether I have the good fortune to secure your cooperation or face your honest opposition'. Probably this is the best reflection of the highest respect Gandhiji had for Sir M. Visvesvaraya's abilities".

Sir M. Visvesvaraya on his part also respected and adored Gandhi for his great abilities to win over the masses. Though Sir M. Visvesvaraya very strongly opposed on certain issues with Gandhiji, he agreed to soften his stand as Gandhiji's words carried more weightage. This was the reason why he even supported the spinning wheel even though he fully knew that it wouldn't make India a strong economy.

Mahatma Gandhi believed in the theory of 'karma'. He believed in the adage 'Man proposes and God disposes'. He constantly strived to attain 'Moksha' or salvation.

But Sir M. Visvesvaraya was a crusader against the negative and defeatist attitude of Indians who had implicit faith in the law of 'karma'. He said 'The worst curse of the country is passivity, slackness and a fatalistic outlook on life. In any individual attempt

we may succeed or we may fail. But the attempt itself is worth making'.

We are influenced either by religious sentiments, class patriotism or belief in kismet which is the root cause of our backwardness, whereas the activities of western nations rest on the economic basis. While they think and act in conformity with economic necessities, we expect to prosper without acquiring the scientific precision, the inventive faculty, the thoroughness, the discipline and restraints of modern civilization'.

Whatever be the differences in the outlook of Gandhiji and Vishvesvaraya, both of them were visionaries. They dreamt of a vibrant India which attained freedom from not only the British but also from our own dogmas and blind beliefs. The views of these two great men are relevant to the present and future of India.

Based on Mokshgundam Visvesvaraya - His life and work by V.S. Narayana Rao, My experiments with truth - Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and To the perplexed by M.K. Gandhi.

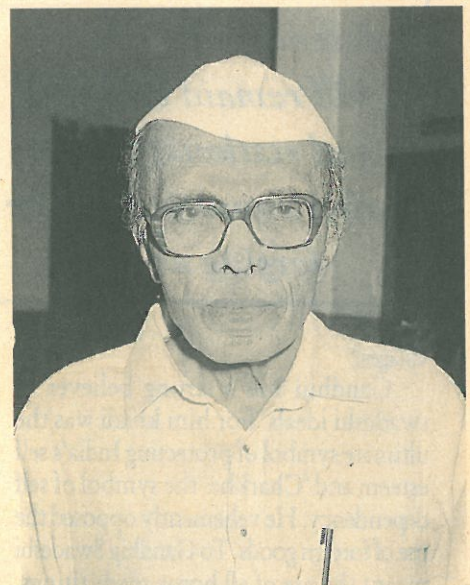
'Gandhiji is misinterpreted'

Dressed in a khadi kurta and dhoti with a khadi Gandhicap, this septuagenarian looks more a saint and seer than the most distinguished educationist and scientist of the country. His simple attire apart, Dr.H.Narasimhaiah is a down to earth personality who is humility personified. The man who has spent a bachelor's life in hostels, is one of the most respected academicians in the country.

G.P.Vinayababu spoke to Dr.H.N., as he is popularly called, and elicited his views on Gandhiji and his relevance to the present day world.

How would you describe Gandhiji?

It is difficult to describe Gandhiji in a few sentences or even in a few volumes. He had such varied facets that I don't think it is possible for anybody to describe Gandhiji that way. Gandhiji can best be described as a man of values. He stood for the development of poor people. He was always concerned with the needs of the last man i.e., 'Antyodaya' and 'Sarvodaya'.



- Dr. H. Narasimhaiah

Before taking up any project he was putting it to test to ascertain whether it helps the poorest of the poor.

Was he an idealist?

I wouldn't call him an idealist. He was a practical and a pragmatic person. He was not an idealist but a realist.

As a Gandhian yourself and a scientist how do you explain Gandhiji's opposition to science, technology, industry and machinery?

That is not true at all. You can't take him literally. He has been grossly misinterpreted. The only thing he said was that we should not become slaves to machines. He was opposed to heavy industries and centralisation of power. He was never opposed to industrialisation. He said if we are going to have heavy industries it would affect poor people. He was for cottage industries and village industries. In fact, he was for a mixed economy. Excessive industrialisation leads to exploitation and unemployment.

Is that true?

Yes! It is true. Even today, by using computers you are replacing human labour. But I wouldn't say we shouldn't go for computerisation and adoption of latest technology. There should be both.

How do you explain the growth of developed countries who have gone for industries?

Heavy industries will deprive the last man of his bread. Even in a country like America which is advanced to such an extent, 15-20 per cent of the people are unemployed and there is lot of social insecurity. If this is the case with such a rich country with just 25 crore population, what will happen to our country with 90 crore people.

The point here is, there should be a balance. I believe in the highest and the best technology. But you can't do away with cottage industries. That is a mixed economy—a balance of both heavy and small industries/village industries. I am totally for the highest technology.

Do you think Gandhiji's ideals are

relevant even to this day?

Ideals of simple living, self dependence etc. are relevant to all times. Today we have five star culture and consumerism. People are only multiplying their wants. This has lead to corruption and malpractices. So, Gandhiji's way of life of simple living and high thinking is very much relevant to our times.

What are his views on education?

He gave importance to basic education. He wanted value-based, character building education.

What are your views on the entry of MNCs into India?

I am for it. But only in selected areas. It

Do you believe in swadeshi theory in today's world of globalisation and liberalisation?

Yes! Otherwise we will be slaves to foreign economy. But again there should be a balance. All this talk on globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation is nothing but Americanisation.

What are your views on 'karma' theory—the theory of believing in what you are today is because of what you did in the past?

That is in fact true. But it shouldn't lead to passivity. Scientifically also it is true. It is nothing but cause and effect theory. Law of causation holds good in modern world also. 'Karma' theory doesn't mean fatalism.



Young H.N. with Mahatma Gandhi (with hands on his shoulders), when he visited Bangalore in 1936

should not be open for products like cornflakes, softdrinks, toothpaste etc. That will definitely destroy our economy. Only in selected areas like the high technology areas, MNCs should be allowed. Otherwise it will affect our small scale industries.

You yourself are leading a life of self control and self-abnegation. Do you think that it is the way to success in life for the present generation?

Yes! It is. It is not dependent on generation. It is dependent on one's mindset. If you have higher ideals, this will come automatically.

Our self effort should also be there. Gandhiji was a man of action. He never allowed fate to dictate terms in his life.

What is Gandhiji's message to the present day youth?

Gandhiji stood for values. He led a simple life. He was concerned about the poor. Simple life and high thinking should be the aim of students. They must have self confidence. They must not become slaves to western culture. Self confidence and hard work is very important. Gandhiji's life itself is an open guide for the students to lead a successful life. □