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Business Ethics, Authored By: Ms. Niti Mehta (B.B.A.LL.B (Hons)), Bennett
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I. ABSTRACT:

“This research paper delves into Mahatma Gandhi's views on corporate responsibility, with a focus on his holistic approach to business ethics. Gandhi believed that businesses should not only aim for profit maximization but also have a deep sense of responsibility towards society and the environment. He emphasised the need for ethical behaviour, transparency, and accountability in the corporate world. In his critique of conventional business practises, Gandhi argued that the unchecked pursuit of profit could have negative impacts on society and the environment. Gandhi's perspective on corporate responsibility was rooted in his vision of Swadeshi, which emphasised local self-sufficiency and the promotion of small-scale industries. He had a positive outlook on the potential for a decentralized economic system to be more sustainable and equitable than a centralized one. Gandhi argued that Swadeshi could help reduce the negative impact of corporations on the environment and society by promoting sustainable production and consumption practises. This paper also discusses the relevance of Gandhi's ideas today, highlighting examples of businesses that follow his principles. However, the paper also acknowledges the challenges and obstacles to implementing Gandhi's vision, including the dominant role of multinational corporations and the influence of neoliberal economic policies”.

II. INTRODUCTION:

Gandhi's views on law and justice can be applied to the concept of corporate responsibility, as he believed that all individuals and institutions have a responsibility to act in a just and compassionate manner¹.¹ Gandhi believed that corporations should be held responsible for their deeds and should act to benefit society rather than only for their own financial gain. He maintained that businesses had a duty to think about the welfare of their workers, clients, and fit society rather than only for their own financial gain. He maintained that businesses had a duty to think about the welfare of their workers, clients, and environment, and that they

¹ Narayan Desai, My Life is my Message.

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needed to use their influence and position to advance social justice and equality².² Gandhi was particularly of the opinion that businesses should be held to a high standard of ethics and conduct themselves honestly and openly. He held that it is imperative for businesses to assume responsibility towards all their stakeholders, encompassing their employees, customers, and the localities in which they operate. Gandhi placed a strong focus on compassion and nonviolence, which also relate to business responsibility. He thought businesses ought to try to minimize harm done to the environment and society, as well as advance peace and harmony.³

III. BACKGROUND ON GANDHI AND HIS PHILOSOPHY:

Mahatma Gandhi is a noteworthy figure in history who played a pivotal role in the Indian independence movement against British colonialism. Hailing from Porbandar, India, the individual's ideology was established upon the principles of veracity, pacifism, and societal equity, ultimately serving as a powerful catalyst for transformation and igniting movements for civil rights and social justice on a global scale⁴. The individual's adherence to Hinduism and conviction in the interdependence of all animate entities exerted a significant influence on his persona. The individual in question maintained the belief that each person possessed an ethical obligation to promote the betterment of society, and that authentic emancipation could solely be achieved by pursuing veracity and adhering to nonviolent principles⁵. The Swadeshi philosophy espoused by the individual in question prioritized the promotion of local self-reliance and small-scale entrepreneurship, and significantly influenced his perspective on corporate responsibility. According to Gandhi's perspective, the unregulated pursuit of wealth by large corporations could potentially have adverse impacts on both the

² Geoffrey Jones and Sudev Sheth, What Gandhi believed is the purpose of a corporation, The Conversation (Oct. 1, 2019), <https://theconversation.com/what-gandhi-believed-is-the-purpose-of-a-corporation-124470>.

³ Kiely Kuligowski, How to Be an Ethical Leader: 10 Tips for Success, Business News Daily (Feb. 22, 2023), <https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/5537-how-to-be-ethical-leader.html>.

⁴ Who was Mahatma Gandhi and what impact did he have on India?, World Economic Forum, (Oct. 2, 2019), <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/10/mahatma-gandhi-who-what-impact-india/>.

⁵ Agnes Simigh, The Principals and Teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, Voice of Guides, (March 13, 2021), <https://voiceofguides.com/the-principles-and-teachings-of-mahatma-gandhi/>.

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environment and society⁶. The individual's endorsement of India's economic autonomy was intimately linked to their commitment to the Swadeshi doctrine. The individual believed that India's attainment of genuine independence hinged on promoting self-reliance and cultivating domestic industries, as opposed to relying on imports⁷.

IV. IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING GANDHI'S VIEW ON CORPORATE:

Understanding Gandhi's viewpoint on companies is important because it has historical relevance. Gandhi was a major character in Indian history, and his experiences in the Indian independence movement influenced his views on businesses. He held that morally sound ideals and principles ought to govern all business decisions. He expressed opposition towards the traditional business model that prioritizes profit maximization and instead advocated for a more inclusive approach that considers the interests of all stakeholders, including employees, clients, and the environment⁸. Gandhi believed that companies had a responsibility to society and should act in everyone's best interests. He believed in fairness and social justice and believed that corporations should do their part to improve society. Gandhi was a fervent supporter of environmental sustainability and held that companies should conduct themselves in an ecologically friendly manner⁹. He championed the Swadeshi philosophy, emphasizing local self-sufficiency and minimizing the damaging effects of big businesses on the environment. Gandhi's perspective on corporations offers an alternate perspective on corporate governance and ethics. The idea that corporations exist only to maximize profit is challenged by his emphasis on moral behavior, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability. His

⁶ Asha Kaushik, Swadeshi, self-reliance and globalization, My life is a message https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/swadeshi_selfreliance_globalization.html.

⁷ Seshadri Chari, Modi's idea of self-reliant India same as Gandhi's — modernisation yes, Western dependence no, The Print, (15 May, 2020) <https://theprint.in/opinion/modis-idea-of-self-reliant-india-same-as-gandhis/421820/>.

⁸ Antara Raghavan, Gandhi's relevance then and now, India Today (Oct 2, 2019) <https://www.indiatoday.in/mail-today/story/gandhi-s-relevance-then-and-now-1605411-2019-10-02>.

⁹ Mel Wilson, Corporate sustainability: what is it and where does it come from?, Ivey Business Journal, (April 2003) <https://iveybusinessjournal.com/publication/corporate-sustainability-what-is-it-and-where-does-it-come-from/>.

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theories offer an alternate framework for considering how business affects society¹⁰.

V. GANDHI'S CRITIQUE OF CONVENTIONAL BUSINESS:

Gandhi espoused a robust criticism of traditional business practices, which he perceived as being incompatible with his principles of veracity, pacifism, and equitable treatment of all members of society. The individual held the belief that the relentless pursuit of financial gain without regard for ethical considerations was not only morally objectionable but also fiscally unviable in the long term¹¹. Gandhi's critique of commerce focused on its prioritization of profit maximization over the well-being of laborer's and the natural world. The individual held the belief that corporations ought to give precedence to the well-being of their workforce and the surrounding society as opposed to solely focusing on their financial gains. The individual in question espoused the notion of a fairer allocation of resources, positing that profit-driven enterprises ought to prioritize the betterment of society over personal gain¹². Gandhi espouses the belief that commercial transactions ought to be carried out with integrity and openness. The individual expressed disapproval towards the widespread adoption of deceitful and immoral methodologies, such as bribery and corruption, which were perceived to erode the fundamental principles of trust and honesty within the community¹³.

V.I THE PROBLEM WITH PROFIT MAXIMIZATION:

According to Gandhi's perspective, the emphasis on profit maximization within the business realm has the potential to compromise fundamental values such as human welfare, social justice, and environmental sustainability. The individual advocated for a paradigm shift in

¹⁰ Mahatma Gandhi had leading-edge views on corporate responsibility, Ucalgary News, (Oct. 2, 2015) <https://www.ucalgary.ca/news/mahatma-gandhi-had-leading-edge-views-corporate-responsibility>.

¹¹ Bidyut Chakrabarty, Universal Benefit: Gandhi's doctrine of Trusteeship, JSTOR, Vol. 49, No. 2 (March 2015), 572-608 (37 pages) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24495414>.

¹² Nishikant Kolge, Gandhi's Criticism of Industrialization and Modernity; An Environmental Perspective, ResearchGate, (January 2011), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280082491_Gandhi's_Criticism_of_Industrialization_and_Modernity_An_Environmental_Perspective.

¹³ ETNOWNEWS.COM <https://www.timesnownews.com/business-economy/personal-finance/planning-investing/article/money-and-the-mahatma-what-gandhi-can-teach-us-about-business-and-the-uses-of-wealth/293220> (Oct. 2, 2018).

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business practices, emphasising the importance of prioritizing the well-being of employees, the community, and the environment over the singular pursuit of financial gains. Gandhi placed significant emphasis on the obligation of corporations to generate a positive impact on society at large. The author posited that prioritizing immediate profits may lead to unfavourable consequences in the long run. As an alternative, the author suggested that companies should devote their resources to sustainable endeavours and the betterment of the community. The beliefs bear noteworthy significance in the present era, particularly due to the growing need for corporate social responsibility and sustainable business practises¹⁴.

V.II THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR:

According to Gandhi's philosophy, it is the moral responsibility of businesses to operate with honesty, transparency, and integrity, while prioritizing the welfare of their employees, clients, and the wider community over financial gain. The author posited that corporations ought to be cognizant of their influence on both the societal and environmental spheres and should implement strategies to alleviate any unfavourable outcomes. Gandhi vehemently opposed unethical practices, including bribery and corruption, and instead advocated for honesty and transparency in all transactions. The individual held the belief that ethical behaviour is a prerequisite for businesses to function fairly and endure over time, fostering cooperation and confidence among members of the society. In summary, Gandhi's ethical paradigm highlights the obligation of corporations to advance the common good and augment societal well-being by means of equitable and enduring methodologies¹⁵.

V.III THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY:

According to Gandhi's perspective, ethical conduct and trust in business are reliant on the fundamental principles of accountability and transparency. The author posited that corporations ought to assume accountability for their conduct and exhibit transparency in their engagements with stakeholders, encompassing shareholders, employees, customers, and the wider

¹⁴ Scroll.in <https://scroll.in/article/939226/mahatma-gandhi-was-arguing-for-sustainable-businesses-long-before-the-world-began-talking-about-them> (Oct. 2, 2019).

¹⁵ Ananya Vajpeyi, Gandhi, morality and political legitimacy, *The Hindu*, (Dec.4, 2012), <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/Gandhi-morality-and-political-legitimacy/article59783850.ece>.

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community. The concept of accountability entails assuming responsibility for one's conduct and acknowledging the resulting outcomes. Transparency pertains to the act of being honest in all dealings and revealing information without any limitations. Gandhi placed significant emphasis on the significance of transparency in business operations, financial outcomes, and potential risks or adverse effects. The individual held the belief that commercial enterprises ought to exhibit transparency and avoid the practise of obscuring data behind a shroud of secrecy¹⁶.

VI. GANDHI'S VISION OF CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY:

Gandhi's conceptualization of corporate responsibility placed emphasis on the promotion of social and environmental equity. It is incumbent upon businesses to prioritise the well-being of individuals and the environment over financial gains, thereby making a positive impact on the community. It is imperative for enterprises to address societal and ecological issues, including but not limited to poverty, inequality, and bias, and adopt a proactive approach towards promoting sustainability. It is imperative for individuals to exhibit social and ecological responsibility by carefully evaluating the consequences of their actions on the environment and society. According to Gandhi's philosophy, enterprises ought to set a precedent by actively participating in the betterment of society, thereby fostering an equitable and unbiased community that places the welfare of all stakeholders at the forefront¹⁷.

VI.I THE ROLE OF BUSINESSES IN SOCIETY:

According to Gandhi's philosophy, businesses bear a responsibility to promote the common good and serve the welfare of society as a whole. It is recommended that companies priorities the well-being of their workforce, demonstrate environmental consciousness, and contribute to the positive growth of the community. The entails providing fair compensation, guaranteeing a safe and healthy workplace, minimizing detrimental impacts on the ecosystem, and advancing

¹⁶ Geoffrey Jones and Sudev Sheth, What Gandhi Believed Is the Purpose of a Corporation, The Wire, (Oct. 1, 2019) <https://thewire.in/history/what-gandhi-believed-is-the-purpose-of-a-corporation>.

¹⁷ Mohapatra, B. Corporate social responsibility in India: rethinking Gandhi's doctrine of trusteeship in the twenty-first century. *Asian J Bus Ethics* 10, 61–84 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13520-021-00121-2>.

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sustainability. It is recommended that businesses engage in philanthropic activities, such as extending support to educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and social welfare initiatives. Furthermore, it is imperative that individuals make a contribution to the development of their local community by creating job opportunities and promoting economic progress within the region. In essence, it is imperative for businesses to operate in a way that promotes the welfare of the broader society rather than exclusively prioritizing their economic benefits¹⁸.

VI.II THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING ALL STAKEHOLDERS:

Gandhi's viewpoint regarding corporate responsibility involves considering the effects of actions on all stakeholders, such as employees, customers, suppliers, and the community, rather than solely emphasizing profit maximization for shareholders. It is imperative for businesses to prioritize the protection of the rights and dignity of all stakeholders, minimize any negative impacts resulting from their actions, and demonstrate transparency in their dealings. It is imperative that stakeholders be provided with a platform to articulate their viewpoints during the decision-making process and that businesses proactively engage with and take into account their concerns¹⁹.

VI.III THE PURSUIT OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

Gandhi's perspective on corporate responsibility placed emphasis on social and environmental equity, whereby businesses were deemed responsible for effecting positive change within the community. The prioritization of financial gains over the well-being of individuals and the environment is deemed inappropriate. Organizations ought to endeavor towards creating an

¹⁸ Indira Rothermund, The individual and society Gandhi's political thought, The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol 28, Issue 2, (Feb. 1969) <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-asian-studies/article/abs/individual-and-society-in-gandhis-political-thought/0B4C823AD310DEC23690EA3EC96F5824>.

¹⁹ Balakrishnan, J., Malhotra, A. & Falkenberg, L. Multi-Level Corporate Responsibility: A Comparison of Gandhi's Trusteeship with Stakeholder and Stewardship Frameworks. J Bus Ethics 141, 133–150 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2687-0>.

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equitable and unbiased society by addressing concerns such as poverty, disparity, and prejudice. It is imperative for individuals to assume a leadership position in promoting ecological sustainability and protecting the environment. It is imperative for enterprises to exhibit social and ecological responsibility by adopting a proactive rather than a reactive approach to addressing concerns²⁰.

VII. SWADESHI AND LOCAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY:

The concept of Swadeshi, which denotes self-reliance or self-sufficiency, was ardently supported by Gandhi. The individual held the belief that Swadeshi was a crucial aspect of the economic and social advancement of India and that it served as a means of opposing colonialism and imperialism. As per Gandhi's perspective, Swadeshi encompassed the advocacy of domestic manufacturing and utilization while diminishing reliance on foreign commodities and amenities. The individual held the belief that such an action would facilitate the growth of domestic industries, generate job prospects, and foster economic advancement. Furthermore, Gandhi held the belief that Swadeshi encompassed not only economic principles but also moral and cultural values. The individual perceived it as a means to conserve and advance Indian culture and customs while also opposing the cultural impacts of colonialism²¹.²¹

VII.I THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF SWADESHI:

Gandhi's ideology was centered around Swadeshi and local autonomy, which entails a nation's pursuit of self-sufficiency through the utilization of native resources and domestic manufacturing. The aforementioned practice not only advances economic principles but also social and political ideals through the cultivation of self-sufficiency, autonomy, and dignity.

²⁰ Balasubramanian, Governing the Socially Responsible Corporation - A Gandhian Perspective, SSRN Electronic Journal, (11 sept. 2009),

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228285542_Governing_the_Socially_Responsible_Corporation_-_A_Gandhian_Perspective.

²¹ Balasubramanian Thiugnanam and V. Venkatranam, Gandhi's view on Swadeshi Nationalism, ResearchGate, (May 2021),

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351812118_GANDHIS_VIEWS_ON_SWADESHI_NATIONALISM.

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Swadeshi can be regarded as a strategy to resist colonialism and imperialism while also promoting sustainability by minimizing the carbon footprint through the utilization of indigenous resources and local manufacturing. According to Gandhi's perspective, the promotion of local self-sufficiency could potentially enhance the resilience of local communities and serve as a protective measure for the environment²².

VII.II THE PROMOTION OF LOCAL BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES:

Gandhi espoused the promotion of Swadeshi and local self-sufficiency as a means to advance indigenous enterprises and societies, stimulate job creation, and foster resilient and autonomous communities. The person maintained the perspective that the proliferation of small and medium-sized enterprises, coupled with the support of regional manufacturing and consumption, could constitute efficacious strategies for mitigating impoverishment, fostering economic advancement, and establishing enhanced parity within communities. Furthermore, Gandhi espoused the significance of promoting autochthonous cultural traditions, customs, and practices as a means to foster social cohesion, cultural heterogeneity, and veneration for indigenous wisdom and sagacity²³.

VII.III THE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY:

According to Gandhi's philosophy, the adoption of Swadeshi and local self-sufficiency could potentially contribute to the preservation of the environment and promote sustainability. This could be achieved by reducing dependence on foreign goods and resources and instead promoting the use of domestic resources and production techniques. The individual held the belief that the aforementioned concepts had the potential to facilitate the adoption of sustainable resources and environmentally friendly practices, which could lead to a decrease in

²² Shelly Shah, Gandhi's Principle of Swadeshi as a means of Ushering in 'Real' Progress, <https://www.sociologydiscussion.com/economics/gandhis-principle-of-swadeshi-as-a-means-of-ushering-in-real-progress/662>.

²³ Prajakta Desai & Sunil Sonawane, Economic impact of Gandhi's models, My Life is a message, <https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/economic-impact-of-gandhis-models.html>.

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carbon emissions and the promotion of a lifestyle that prioritizes ecological awareness. Gandhi espoused the principle of environmental conservation, contending that societies ought to demonstrate reverence for the environment and its resources by employing them in a sustainable manner²⁴.

VII.IV MAKE IN INDIA:

The Indian government's Make in India project, which was unveiled in 2014, has been lauded as a significant step towards encouraging manufacturing and national economic development. The effort has, however, also come under fire from certain quarters for being overly preoccupied with luring in foreign capital and boosting big enterprises at the detriment of local small firms. The Mahatma Gandhi-promoted Swadeshi ideology presents an alternative vision of economic growth in this regard that is more enduring and sensitive to the demands of local populations. Swadeshi places a strong emphasis on encouraging small-scale businesses, regional self-sufficiency, and the use of local resources. This strategy not only promotes economic growth and job creation at the local level but is also more ecologically sustainable²⁵. Some of the Swadeshi tenets should be included into the Make in India initiative's strategy. Instead of depending primarily on big international firms, the programme may, for instance, emphasise boosting local manufacturing and entrepreneurship. This would not only increase employment but also encourage an innovative and entrepreneurial culture locally. Gandhi's concept of corporate responsibility, which emphasizes the necessity of ethical behaviour, accountability, and transparency in business, might potentially serve as inspiration for the Make in India project. The programme could contribute to ensuring that economic growth is sustainable and advantageous to all societal members by

²⁴ Pathak H, Suresh Pal and Mohapatra T (2020) Mahatma Gandhi's Vision of Agriculture: Achievements of ICAR. Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi
<https://niasm.icar.gov.in/sites/default/files/pdfs/Gandhiji's%20Vision%20of%20Agriculture%20and%20ICAR's%20Achievements.pdf>

²⁵ Gaurab Dasgupta, Key projects announced under Make in India, Business Standard, (18th April 2023)
https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/key-projects-announced-under-make-in-india-116021200853_1.html.

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fostering a culture of corporate responsibility²⁶. In summary, Gandhi's corporate responsibility and Swadeshi ideas might be applied to the Make in India project to its advantage. The effort might contribute to the creation of a more sustainable, just, and wealthy India by taking a more all-encompassing approach to economic growth.

VIII. THE RELEVANCY OF GANDHIAN IDEAS TODAY WITH EXAMPLES:

The enduring relevancy of the Gandhian principles of Swadeshi and corporate responsibility is evident in the modern corporate landscape. The individual expressed dissent towards the conventional approach to conducting business that places emphasis on maximizing financial gain at the expense of societal and ecological obligations. Currently, there is a growing acknowledgement of the importance of corporate social responsibility and sustainable business practises. According to Gandhi's philosophy, it is the responsibility of businesses to prioritise the betterment of society and work towards the progress of collective well-being. According to Gandhi's philosophy, businesses ought to be governed by a strong ethical structure that prioritizes social and environmental equity over financial gain. Contemporary society increasingly demands that businesses adopt a proactive approach towards addressing ecological and societal concerns. The viewpoint of Gandhi regarding corporate responsibility offers valuable insights into the effective management of businesses' pursuit of financial gain while simultaneously addressing societal and environmental concern²⁷. The Swadeshi philosophy propagated by Gandhi placed emphasis on promoting self-reliance at the local level and fostering the growth of small-scale industries. This holds particular significance in the present-day context, owing to the widespread occurrence of globalisation and the existence of sizable multinational corporations. The concept of Swadeshi offers a distinct model of

²⁶ Swadeshi vs Make in India, The pioneer (May 15, 2020),
<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2020/columnists/swadeshi-vs-make-in-india.html>.

²⁷ Balakrishnan, J., Malhotra, A. & Falkenberg, L. Multi-Level Corporate Responsibility: A Comparison of Gandhi's Trusteeship with Stakeholder and Stewardship Frameworks. J Bus Ethics 141, 133–150 (2017).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2687-0>.

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economic advancement that is relatively more enduring and aligned with the needs of local communities. Gandhi placed significant emphasis on the importance of ethical behavior, accountability, and transparency within the corporate industry. The current scenario of corporate misconduct and ecological disasters has led to a growing demand for heightened corporate accountability and transparency. The viewpoint of Gandhi regarding corporate responsibility carries noteworthy ramifications for businesses to foster an environment of ethical conduct and transparency in modern society²⁸. The contemporary significance of Mahatma Gandhi's ideologies is particularly noteworthy in the domains of sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility. ***Several of Gandhi's fundamental principles remain relevant in contemporary times:***

- i. Non-violence promotes peaceful resistance and the avoidance of harm to others, including animals and the environment²⁹.*
- ii. Swadeshi emphasizes the importance of local self-sufficiency, promoting the use of locally produced goods and services to support local communities³⁰.*
- iii. Satyagraha encourages the use of nonviolent civil disobedience to bring about social and political change³¹.*
- iv. Trusteeship advocates for the responsible use of resources and the distribution of wealth in a way that benefits society as a whole³².*

There are several businesses that follow Gandhi's principles in their operations. Here are some examples:

- i. The Body Shop is a multinational corporation in the cosmetics and skincare industry that advocates ethical business conduct. This includes the utilization of natural and*

²⁸ Yojna, Vol – 63, (Oct. 2019) [http://yojana.gov.in/Yojana-October-19-Eng-final%20\(3\).pdf](http://yojana.gov.in/Yojana-October-19-Eng-final%20(3).pdf).

²⁹ United Nation, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/10/1102022>.

³⁰ Akhil Gaur, Swadeshi Movement in India- Leaders, Impact on History, (Feb 13th, 2023) <https://www.adda247.com/school/swadeshi-movement-in-india/>.

³¹ Jonathan English, Satyagraha: Gandhi's Civil Disobedience and Nonviolent Resistance, (October 22nd, 2020), <https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2020/10/satyagraha-gandhi-civil-disobedience-nonviolent-resistance-jonathan-english.html>.

³² N. Rana & U. Majmudar, Can a Trusteeship Model Redefine Business in the 21st Century? (January 17, 2014), <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/ResponsibleFuture/can-a-trusteeship-model-redefine-business-in-the-21st-century/>.

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non-animal tested components, equitable trade sourcing, and community trade programmes³³.

- ii. Patagonia is a clothing and outdoor gear company that places a strong emphasis on environmental sustainability and social responsibility. They are committed to reducing their environmental impact, promoting fair labour practices, and supporting grassroots environmental organizations³⁴.*
- iii. Cafe Direct is a coffee company that sources its beans directly from small-scale farmers, paying them a fair price for their product. They also support local community development projects in the areas where their coffee is produced³⁵.*
- iv. Toms is a footwear enterprise that employs a one-to-one business model, whereby for every pair of shoes sold, a corresponding pair is contributed to a child in need. They also have a range of sustainable and ethical products, including vegan shoes and recycled materials³⁶.*

The aforementioned enterprises exemplify the feasibility of operating a prosperous corporation while upholding ethical and sustainable methodologies, and adhering to the tenets espoused by Gandhi can serve as a beneficial framework in attaining this objective. **In India, there are several businesses that follow Mahatma Gandhi's principles. Here are some examples:**

- i. Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan is a government-sponsored retail chain that promotes the use of khadi (hand-spun and hand-woven cotton) and other handloom fabrics, which were strongly advocated by Gandhi as a means of supporting local communities and promoting self-sufficiency³⁷.*
- ii. Fabindia is a retail chain that specializes in traditional Indian handicrafts and textiles, promoting the use of natural materials and supporting local artisans and*

³³ The Body Shop, <https://www.thebodyshop.com/en-gb/about-us/brand-values/sustainability/sustainability-commitments/a/a00063>.

³⁴ Patagonia <https://www.patagonia.com/our-responsibility-programs.html>.

³⁵ Café Direct <https://www.cafedirect.co.uk/>.

³⁶ Toms https://toms.gr/?lang=en_US.

³⁷ Khadi Gramodoy Bhawan <https://khadigramodyogbhavan.com/>.

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craftspeople^{38,38}

- iii. Amul is a dairy cooperative that was founded on the principles of self-reliance and community empowerment. It is owned and operated by local farmers, who receive a fair price for their milk and are involved in the decision-making process of the cooperative*³⁹.
- iv. Janalakshmi Financial Services is a microfinance organisation that caters to the financial needs of low-income individuals and communities. Its primary objective is to promote financial inclusion and empowerment*⁴⁰.
- v. Nirma is a detergent and personal care products company that was founded on the principle of providing affordable and high-quality products to rural and low-income consumers*⁴¹.

These businesses demonstrate the ongoing relevance of Gandhi's ideas in India, particularly in terms of promoting local self-sufficiency, community empowerment, and ethical business practices. By following Gandhi's principles, these businesses are able to create meaningful social impact while also achieving commercial success.

IX. CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES TO IMPLEMENTING GANDHI'S VISION:

The nonviolent civil disobedience, self-reliance, regional autonomy, sustainability, and simplicity envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi are still relevant and inspiring today. However, the implementation of his vision encounters numerous obstacles and challenges. Change resistance is the primary impediment to realizing Gandhi's vision. Numerous individuals and institutions may be reticent to adopt novel methodologies or to challenge established frameworks and authoritative hierarchies. This resistance may stem from a dread of the

³⁸ Fabindia <https://www.fabindia.com/>.

³⁹ Amul <https://amul.com/m/organisation>.

⁴⁰ Morgan Stanley <https://www.morganstanley.com/im/en-us/individual-investor/about-us/newsroom/press-release/janalakshmi-will-become-jana-small-finance-bank.html>.

⁴¹ Nirma <https://nirma.co.in/>.

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unknown, a desire to maintain the status quo, or an inability to comprehend the advantages of change. To overcome this obstacle, advocates of Gandhi's vision must persist in educating and convincing others of the benefits of adopting his ideas⁴². The increasing polarisation of the current political climate is a further obstacle to implementing Gandhi's vision. In such a divisive environment, it can be difficult to cultivate consensus and encourage nonviolent civil disobedience and peaceful resistance. However, Gandhi's philosophy emphasizes the significance of dialogue and comprehension, which can be used to bridge the gap between opposing viewpoints and create a more cohesive society⁴³. Local communities and small-scale producers may find it difficult to contend with multinational corporations as a result of globalisation. This rivalry can make it challenging to advocate for self-reliance and regional autonomy, which are central to Gandhi's vision. However, Gandhi's philosophy emphasizes localism and community, which can be utilized to establish networks of small-scale producers and consumers who support one another⁴⁴. Gandhi's philosophy of simplicity and detachment from material objects may be at odds with the ideology of consumerism, which places an emphasis on material possessions. In a culture that values accumulation and consumption, it can be challenging to promote the notion that less is more. However, Gandhi's philosophy prioritizes interior fulfilment over material possessions, which can be used to counter the consumerism narrative⁴⁵. The ongoing degradation of the natural environment represents a significant barrier to Gandhi's concept of sustainability and conscientious resource management. To realize Gandhi's vision, we must address climate change, pollution, and the depletion of natural resources. Gandhi's philosophy emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life and the significance of preserving the natural world, which can

⁴² Byerin Blakemore, How Gandhi Changed Political Protest, National Geographic (Sept.27, 2019)

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/mahatma-gandhi-changed-political-protest>

⁴³ Niranjana Sahoo, Mounting Majoritarianism and Political Polarization in India, Carnegie Endowment (August 18, 2020) <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/08/18/mounting-majoritarianism-and-political-polarization-in-india-pub-82434>.

⁴⁴ Faced with today's crisis, what would Gandhi do? (June 18, 2020),

[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31413-6.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(20)31413-6.pdf).

⁴⁵ The Minimalist Gandhi, View through my window, (October 18, 2019),

<https://viewthroughmywindow.com/the-minimalist-gandhi/>.

be utilized to promote sustainability and environmental consciousness⁴⁶. The vision of Mahatma Gandhi is still relevant and inspiring, but it confronts numerous challenges and obstacles that must be overcome to be fully realized. Gandhi's vision must be implemented by overcoming resistance to change, fostering consensus, promoting self-reliance and simplicity, combating consumerism, and addressing environmental issues.

X. FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE:

In India, there exist numerous legal cases pertaining to Swadeshi and corporate responsibility that underscore the significance of Gandhi's comprehensive perspective on business ethics. Several instances have been identified, including:

i. Nestle India's Maggi Noodles Controversy:

In 2015, Nestle India's Maggi noodles were found to contain high levels of lead and MSG, which led to a nationwide ban on the product. This incident highlighted the importance of corporate responsibility and transparency, as Nestle India was accused of not disclosing the ingredients in its products and violating food safety norms⁴⁷.

ii. Tata Group's Corporate Social Responsibility:

The Tata Group is known for its commitment to corporate social responsibility, and has established several initiatives to promote education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. In 2014, the Tata Group launched the Tata Sustainability Group, which focuses on promoting sustainable business practices and social responsibility⁴⁸.

iii. Amul Dairy's Success Story:

Amul Dairy is a cooperative owned and run by farmers in India and is a prime example of the Swadeshi philosophy in action. The cooperative model has enabled farmers to gain more

⁴⁶ Govind Singh, Gandhi, Environment and the Sustainable Development Pathway, Delhi Greens, (Sept. 2, 2017) <https://delhigreens.com/2017/10/02/gandhi-environment-sustainable-development-pathway/>.

⁴⁷ Nestle 'unhealthy' food controversy: Looking back at the Maggi Noodles crisis in India, India Today (Jun 2, 2021), <https://www.indiatoday.in/business/story/nestle-unhealthy-food-controversy-looking-back-at-the-maggi-noodles-crisis-in-india-1810003-2021-06-02>.

⁴⁸ Shah, S. (2014). Corporate Social Responsibility: A Way of Life at the Tata Group. Journal of Human Values, 20(1), 59–74. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971685813515591>.

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control over the production and distribution of milk and has helped to promote rural development and economic growth⁴⁹.

iv. Bhopal Gas Tragedy:

The Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984, which resulted in the deaths of over 3,000 people and the long-term health effects on many more, is a tragic example of the consequences of corporate negligence and lack of responsibility. Union Carbide, the company responsible for the disaster, was accused of cutting corners on safety measures and failing to take responsibility for the disaster. The aforementioned legal precedents underscore the significance of corporate accountability and the necessity for enterprises to embrace a comprehensive perspective on business morality, as espoused by Gandhi. Through the implementation of sustainable business practises and the consideration of the welfare of all stakeholders, businesses have the potential to contribute to the creation of a more equitable and prosperous society⁵⁰.

XI. CONCLUSION:

The idea of corporate responsibility may be compared to Gandhi's perspectives on justice and the law. The individual maintained that corporations bear an obligation to take into account the well-being of their staff, clientele, and the natural world, and that they ought to leverage their influence and standing to advance principles of fairness and parity in society. Gandhi opposes the notion that companies just exist to maximize profit by emphasising moral conduct, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability. His theories offer an alternate framework for considering how business affects society. It is crucial to comprehend Gandhi's viewpoint on business since it provides a historical and moral perspective that might guide modern business practises. Gandhi was of the opinion that enterprises shouldn't have profit maximization as their only goal because doing so may result in unethical behaviour, environmental damage, and economic inequity. Instead, he emphasised the value of moral

⁴⁹ Umesh Singh, Success Story: How Amul Became a Best Dairy Brand in India? Ziploan (August 13, 2021), <https://blog.ziploan.in/amul-success-story/>.

⁵⁰ Bhopal Gas Tragedy after 38 years: Why the govt is demanding compensation now, Indian Express, (Apr.18, 2023) <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/bhopal-gas-tragedy-1984-explained-8303103/>.

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conduct, responsibility, and openness in business dealings and saw corporate responsibility as a way to advance the interests of all stakeholders, including staff members, clients, and the general public. The ideology of Gandhi underscores the importance of prioritizing the societal and environmental needs of companies, while simultaneously promoting sustainability in the long run and equitable outcomes. Gandhian perspectives on Swadeshi and corporate responsibility are still important in today's culture. His vision must overcome obstacles including change reluctance, political divisiveness, globalization, consumerism, and environmental deterioration. Despite these challenges, Gandhi's views on moral behavior, responsibility, and openness in the business world have important ramifications for how organisations might foster a culture of accountability and sustainability while tackling social and environmental issues.

