Rajagiri Journal of Social Development
Volume 12, Number 1, June 2020

Gandhi and Ruskin: Reflections from Phoenix Settlement in South Africa

Teresa Joseph*

Abstract

John Ruskin is often referred to as the father of Gandhian economic thought. While the extent of his influence on Mahatma Gandhi has been a matter of debate, Gandhi himself has acknowledged his debt to Ruskin on various occasions. Ruskin's book *Unto This Last* was an essential reading for the inmates of Gandhi's ashrams and Gandhi paraphrased and translated it into Gujarati entitling it *Sarvodaya*. Inspired by the book, he established the Phoenix Settlement in South Africa to put Ruskin's ideals into practice. This was the first of Gandhi's experiments which laid the foundation for the ashrams that he established later in life, both in South Africa and in India. Given the diverse socio-economic problems confronting the world today, be it at the individual, societal, state or international level, there is a need to understand the precepts of Ruskin's philosophy of *Unto This Last* and the extent of its influence on Mahatma Gandhi, as well as the manner in which Gandhi attempted to put these ideals into practice. This critical juncture in history calls for a rediscovery of Gandhi's views on moral economics or the inseparability of economics from ethics and the need to draw lessons from the experiments of the Phoenix Settlement.

Keywords

Gandhi, Ruskin, Phoenix Settlement, Sarvodaya, Gandhian economics

Introduction

Gandhi wrote in his autobiography (1927: 84), "Three moderns have left a deep impression on my life and captivated me. Raychandbhai by his living contact, Tolstoy by his book, *The Kingdom of God is within You* and

* Teresa Joseph, Centre for Gandhian Studies, Alphonsa College, Pala, Kottayam – 686574, Kerala, India, Email: teresajoseph123@gmail.com

Ruskin by his *Unto This Last*". It was in 1904 that Gandhi read Ruskin's *Unto This Last* which according to him 'brought an instantaneous and practical transformation' in his life. He continued to stand by the influence the book had on him for the following decades, acknowledging it as late as in 1946, two years before his death. It was after reading Ruskin that Gandhi began to give serious thought to economics. As the world celebrates 150 years of the Mahatma (1869-1948) and 200 years of Ruskin (1819-1900), it would be appropriate to examine the impact of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* on Gandhi.

This paper examines Ruskin's ideals that influenced Gandhi and the manner in which he sought to put them into practice, taking the Phoenix Settlement as a case in point. It throws light on Gandhi's perspective of moral economics, particularly with regard to the concern for the downtrodden and the dignity of labour, which is of utmost significance in the globalised world of today.

Ruskin, *Unto This Last and* the Economics of Justice

A British writer and art critic, Ruskin's important works include the eight volume *Fors Clavigera* (1891), *Sesame and Lilies* (1894), *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1895), *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), *The Political Economy of Art* (1868) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851). Ruskin rejected the classical theories of economists such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo and John Stuart Mill.

In 1860 he wrote a series of essays in the *Cornhill Magazine* that were highly critical of the capitalist system. He argued that capitalism creates a hierarchal social structure and a hyper-competitive culture, besides undermining the dignity of labour. He suggested the alternative of building an economic system that would facilitate fair wages and would focus on enabling the least powerful rather than the most powerful. This collection of essays was published as a book titled *Unto this Last: Four Essays on the First Principle of Political Economy*. It sought to provide "an accurate and stable definition of wealth" and to show that "the acquisition of wealth was finally possible only under certain moral conditions of society, of which quite the first was a belief in the existence and even, for practical purpose, in the attainability of honesty" (Ruskin, 1883: ix).

The title *Unto this Last* was taken from the Bible, from chapter 20, verse 14 of the Gospel of St. Mathew. This passage in the New Testament

narrates the parable of a land owner who hired labourers for his vineyard. Some of them were sent to the vineyard in the morning, while others were hired later at different intervals. But at the end of the day, all of them were given the same wages. When those who had been working from morning complained, the owner's response was: "Friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is and go thy way. I will give unto this last even as unto thee."

In a similar vein, Ruskin advocates equal pay for all workers, irrespective of who could work more. Ruskin (1883) argues that it is always in the interest of both the master and the labourer that "the work should be rightly done and a just price obtained for it; but, in the division of profits, the gain of the one may or may not be the loss of the other. It is not the master's interest to pay wages so low as to leave the men sickly and depressed, nor the workman's interest to be paid high wages if the smallness of the master's profit hinders him from enlarging his business, or conducting it in a safe and liberal way" (p.21). He further points out that the general law respecting just or economical exchange is that "there must be advantage on both sides...and whatever advantage there is on either side and whatever pay is given to the intermediate person, should be thoroughly known to all concerned" (p. 110).

Ruskin's argument is that labour should not be paid according to demand and supply, which tends to reduce manual work to the level of a mere commodity. On the other hand, it should be remunerated according to the principles of justice. Furthermore, he argued that manual labour should be made compulsory for all and machinery of all kinds must be renounced, except that which is driven by wind and water (Dantwala, 1995). Ruskin (1883: 70) contends that "in order to grow rich scientifically, we must grow rich justly; and, therefore, know what is just; so that our economy will no longer depend merely on prudence, but on jurisprudence — and that of divine, not human law". Conceding that while absolute justice is no longer attainable, he feels that "the universal and constant action of justice" is "to diminish the power of wealth, in the hands of one individual, over masses of men and to distribute it through a chain of men" (p. 81).

In other words, Ruskin pleads for a humanistic view of economics. He argues that the real aim of economics should not be the accumulation of material wealth or power, but the promotion of the welfare of the people

at large. Accumulation for oneself would deny one's neighbour his/her rightful share. He argues that true economics is the economics of justice (Desai, 2009). Ruskin rejected the craze for machinery and consumerism, advocating simple technology, manual labour and communal enterprise.

Gandhi and the 'Magic Spell' of *Unto This Last*

Gandhi was introduced to Ruskin when he was about to depart on a journey from Johannesburg to Durban. A friend of his, Henry Polak, a Jewish immigrant in South Africa who was the Assistant Editor of *The Transvaal Critic* (a weekly dealing largely with Transvaal politics), gave him a copy of Ruskin's *Unto this Last* at the station. Gandhi later recalled the tremendous influence that the book had on him. In a chapter in his autobiography (1927) entitled "The Magic Spell of a Book" he writes that "the book was impossible to lay aside, once I had begun it. It gripped me... I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book" (p. 275). He revealed that it "brought an instantaneous and practical transformation" in his life. He further added: "I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life." He summarised the teachings of *Unto this Last,* as he understood it, in three basic points:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. That a life of labour, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living (p.276).

Gandhi confessed that while the first he already knew and the second he had dimly realised, the third had never occurred to him. In 1908 Gandhi paraphrased and translated *Unto This Last* into Gujarati and titled it *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all). It was initially published in nine instalments in Gandhi's newspaper in South Africa – *Indian Opinion,* between 10 May and 18 July. Bhattacharya (1969) points out that Gandhi's Gujarati version of *Unto This Last* was a shortened adaptation of the original work. Gandhi simplified passages leaving out sentences that he felt were unnecessary for his purpose, so as to maintain the true spirit of the book. Along with *Hind Swaraj,* the book was banned by the British Government

during Gandhi's Satyagraha movement in India in 1920.

The Gujarati version was re-translated into English in which the essay originally titled 'The Roots of Honour' appears as 'The Roots of Truth'. Gandhi added a conclusion to the Gujarati version pointing out that Ruskin's book had a lesson for Indians no less than for English readers. He wrote that "true economics is the economics of justice. People will be happy in so far as they learn to do justice and be righteous. All else is not only vain but leads straight to destruction. To teach the people to get rich by hook or by crook is to do them an immense disservice" (Gandhi, 1956: 37-38). According to him, if one paid due wages to a person, he would not be able to amass unnecessary riches or waste money on luxuries. On the other hand, the worker who receives due wages will act justly to his subordinates. "Thus, the stream of justice will not dry up, but gather strength as it flows onward. And the nation with such a sense of justice will be happy and prosperous" (Gandhi, 1956:36).

Throughout his life, the concept of Sarvodaya remained a major motivating force. Ruskin's strong anti-capitalist stance that critiqued the concentration and centralisation of capital in a few hands, the exploitation of labour and the constant capital-labour conflicts attracted Gandhi. The idea of trusteeship as a measure to reform capitalism and get rid of excess wealth was also gleaned from *Unto This Last* (Ghosh, 2012). As Rao points out, Ruskin's influence on Gandhi's views of political economy is evident from the latter's perspective that "economics and ethics should go together. Justice and equality of all should be the guiding principles" (2017: 144). Gandhi's Sarvodaya was based on a non-violent society devoid of exploitation, based on decentralisation, swadeshi and small-scale industries.

Gandhi's views on science, technology and machinery were also influenced by Ruskin. He explained:

> I am not opposed to the movement of manufacturing machines in the country, nor to making improvements in machinery. I am only concerned with what these machines are made for. I may ask, in the words of Ruskin, whether these machines will be such as would blow off a million men in a minute or they will be such as would turn wastelands into arable and fertile lands (Gandhi, 1919: 134-135).

Some of the striking similarities in the thoughts of Ruskin and Gandhi were their views on the supremacy of the spirit and trust in the nobleness

of human nature; both seek to moralise politics and economics; both emphasise the priority of social regeneration rather than mere political reform; both insist that the capitalist should adopt a wise paternal attitude in relation to his employees; both wanted the rich to use their capital and wisdom as a trust for the good of all. While Ruskin emphasised just payment to the worker, Gandhi was also stringent about the behaviour of the Trustee. He did not rule out State regulation to ensure that the Trustee does not hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or disregard the interest of the society (Dantwala, 1995; Dhawan, 1990).

However, Gandhi did not accept all the ideas in *Unto This Last*. Ruskin and Gandhi differed with regard to the nature and functions of the State. Ruskin was not an advocate of non-violence or democracy (Bhattacharya, 1969). Although both Ruskin and Gandhi were concerned with social welfare, Ruskin aimed at the welfare of 'the greatest number', while Gandhi aimed at the welfare of all. As Vinoba Bhave stated, Gandhi was the real author of the term Sarvodaya, as 'unto this last' would mean only the 'uplift of the last' (Mishra and Narayanaswamy, 2009).

Stirring Dormant Convictions

The general narrative is that it was immediately after reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last* that Gandhi decided to lead a life of communal living, going on to set up the Phoenix Settlement. The idea of welfare of all was already inherent in Gandhi before he read *Unto this Last*. This was made clear by Gandhi in his autobiography (1927: 276) when he wrote "the first of these I knew" i.e. that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. Although similar ideas were already going through his mind, he explicitly states in his autobiography: "I believe that I discovered some of my deepest convictions reflected in this great book of Ruskin and that is why it so captured me and made me transform my life. A poet is one who can call forth the good latent in the human breast. Poets do not influence all alike, for everyone is not evolved in an equal measure" (Gandhi, 1927: 276).

As Desai (2009: 481) points out, although Ruskin and Gandhi were never in direct contact, "Ruskin had lucidly articulated that which was deep within Gandhiji". It was due to the fact that Gandhi had been discussing similar ideas with his friends that Polak gave him a copy of *Unto This Last* saying: "You are sure to like this book" (Desai, 2009: 289).

In 1916 Gandhi recalled a conversation with a friend who was horrified to hear that he had not read the works of well-known economists such as Mill, Marshall, Smith and others before experimenting with economic matters. Gandhi's response was "There comes to us moments in life when about some things we need no proof from without. A little voice within us tells us, 'you are on the right track, turn neither to your left nor right, but keep to the straight and narrow way'" (Diwan and Lutz, 1985: 8). This appears to be a *post facto* justification for his experiments in various ashrams including the Phoenix Settlement.

Gandhi had shown an interest in communal living ever since his arrival in South Africa and invited his friends to live with him in his house in Natal. An Order of Trappist monks living on the outskirts of Durban provided him "with a functioning example of a micro-community living on the basis of voluntary poverty, self-renunciation and constructive work" (Thomson, 1993). He visited the monastery in April 1895 and wrote about his experience in *The Vegetarian*, a weekly newspaper published from London, of which Gandhi had officiated as editor. Providing a detailed description of the monastery, Gandhi (1895:224) wrote that "the settlement is a quiet little model village, owned on the truest republican principles. The principle of liberty, equality and fraternity is carried out in its entirety". In his conclusion, Gandhi states: "I know from personal experience that a visit to the farm is worth a voyage from London to Natal".

The Genesis of Phoenix

It was immediately after reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last* on the train journey in 1904 that Gandhi felt that *Indian Opinion* (a newspaper started by Madanjit Vyavaharik with Gandhi's support in 1903), could be run on a cooperative basis and that it could be shifted to a farm where the workers would live in a community atmosphere. Gandhi visited a relative who had a plot of land some distance outside Durban and immediately thought of establishing an experiment of communal living there. He decided to take *Indian Opinion* and the International Printing Press (IPP), which was also established by Vyavaharik in 1898, to a farm where he could live with the workers as members of his family. Gandhi sought to put Ruskin's theories to practice and thus emerged the genesis of the Phoenix Settlement.

Gandhi discussed his plans with his friend Albert West. Both *Indian*

Opinion and IPP had been handed over to Gandhi by Vyavahrik in repayment of his loans from Gandhi as well as because he wanted to return to India. They had been able to survive with major financial support from him. IPP initially undertook general job printing including that of newspapers, pamphlets and booklets, but by 1907 it focused on printing *Indian Opinion*. West, who was by then managing *Indian Opinion*, approved Gandhi's proposal to transfer *Indian Opinion* and IPP to a farm based on Ruskin's ideals, on which everyone would work, drawing the same living wage and attending to the press work during their spare time. Three pounds was laid down as the monthly allowance per head, irrespective of position, colour or nationality. It was the same for the editor, the errand boy and the compositor. The workers could live a simple life on the farm and would be given a plot of land to live on and till. Any profit made would be divided among them.

Yet Gandhi wondered whether all the workers in the press would agree to go and settle on an out-of-the-way farm and be satisfied with bare maintenance. He therefore proposed that those who could not fit in with the scheme could continue to draw their salaries and gradually try to reach the ideal of becoming members of the settlement. Chhaganlal Gandhi, one of Gandhi's cousins and the machinist Govindaswami agreed to the proposal. The rest did not join the scheme, but agreed to go to wherever he moved the press.

Gandhi advertised for a piece of land near a railway station in the vicinity of Durban. An offer came in respect of Phoenix and he went with West to inspect the estate. Within a week 20 acres of land was purchased. An adjoining piece of 80 acres was also purchased at a total cost of £1,000 (Gandhi, 1927).The land, the building materials and the workers' stipends were mainly paid for by Gandhi and the Durban merchant Parsee Rustomji. Gandhi provided a substantial sum of £3,500 from his own savings and Rustomji contributed in cash as well as in kind. Gandhi (1927: 276-277) wrote that Rustomji "placed at my disposal second-hand corrugated iron sheets of a big godown and other building material, with which we started work. Some Indian carpenters and masons, who had worked with me in the Boer War, helped me in erecting a shed for the press. This structure, which was 75 feet long and 50 feet broad, was ready in less than a month".

Gandhi did not want a motorised press, but one that worked with a

hand crank, as it would be more in tune with the agricultural aspect of the farm. He soon realised that this aim was impractical therefore an oil-fuelled engine was installed. A hand-driven wheel was also installed in case the oil-fuelled engine stopped working. The size of the paper was reduced to make it more practical, as the smaller pages would be easier to publish if the hand crank became their only option. Initially everyone worked night and day and the first Phoenix issue of *Indian Opinion* was published as scheduled on 24 December 1904 (Marcello, 2007).

Putting Theory into Practice

In a letter to the Private Secretary of the Secretary of State for the Colonies dated 20 November 1906, Gandhi attached a petition by the delegates on behalf of British Indians in the Transvaal which stated that Gandhi was the proprietor of *Indian Opinion*, which was being "run on Tolstoy's and Ruskin's lines" and from which no profits were made (Gandhi, 1906: 198). He further elaborated in *Indian Opinion* of 3 July 1909 (Gandhi, 1909: 274) that Phoenix was "intended to put into practice, the essential teachings of Tolstoy and Ruskin and, in its outward manifestation, to assist in removing the grievances of British Indians in South Africa."

The Phoenix Settlement was actually 2.5 miles from Phoenix station and Gandhi deliberately decided to retain this name for the establishment as well. Explaining to his nephew Maghanlal as to why his first ashram was named Phoenix, Gandhi stated that "its significance, as the legend goes, is that the bird Phoenix comes back to life again and again from its ashes, i.e. it never dies...We believe that the aims of Phoenix will not vanish even when we are turned to dust" (Kulkarni, 2012: 31).

Phoenix was established in dedication to Ruskin's notions that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all; to the belief that all work is equally worthy; and that the life of labour is the life worth living. Those who lived there found that "such commitments made the private public and the personal political. Caste differences based on purity and pollution gave way to inter-dining, 'washing one's own dishes, cleaning others' pots and pans and disposing of one's own wastes. In the world of the ashram, private concerns and commitments helped define the public sphere" (Nanda, 2004: 163).

The pioneers at the settlement, Albert West, Govindaswamy and

Chhaganlal Gandhi, were joined by several relatives of Gandhi – Maganlal, Abhayachand and Anandhlal, besides his friends Herbert Kitchin and Henry Polak. In 1906 Gandhi's wife Kasturba and children joined them. Other settlers also brought their wives and children, while yet others married and established families.

As Hofmeyr (2013) describes, at its height Phoenix was home to about 60 residents. A majority of this group had agreed to the proposal to earn Ł3 a month and that they would be entitled to two acres of land and would devote themselves to producing *Indian Opinion*. The IPP functioned as a leveller, where everyone undertook physical labour irrespective of their caste or religious background. There were no servants at Phoenix and everyone had to do their own work, including the carrying of water and the cleaning of latrines. Night soil had to be collected and carried to pits dug by the inmates. While water for drinking had to be collected by storing rainwater, that for bathing, washing and other household needs, had to be brought from two springs nearby (Nayar, 1989).

Rajmohan Gandhi (1997) points out that the ethos of Phoenix can be derived from Rajivbhai Patel's account of his first day there. Patel had joined the ashram in 1912 at the age of 24. He recalls that breakfast consisted of home-made bread and wheat porridge, after which farming commenced at 7 a.m. He worked alongside Gandhi, preparing plant beds with a hoe for fruit trees. Gradually Phoenix had transformed itself so much that most settlers grew a major portion of their vegetables.

Gandhi was keen to apply the most appropriate techniques in his agricultural and artisanal activities. For example, the inmates of the ashram were sent from Phoenix to learn from Trappist monks how to make sandals, the resulting products providing a valuable source of income for the institution. He advocated a careful study of horticulture and the establishment of model farms that would provide an example for surrounding farmers (Hardiman, 2003).

Phoenix also formed a stepping stone in Gandhi's educational philosophy. An informal boarding school for children from both within as well as outside the settlement was established. The routine for students was that they attended school from 9 to 11 a.m. They then spent half an hour working in the fields. Gandhi felt that they needed to learn to work in the fields in the heat of the sun. At 11.30 a.m. they bathed, had lunch

and worked on their own while the adults worked in the press. At 3 p.m. they went to assist in the press or receive vocational training and at 5 p.m. they returned to work in the fields till sunset. In the case of adults, the daily routine included ploughing, printing and praying. The day would end with a half an hour multi-faith service in which Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and Christians sang hymns and read the various scriptures in different languages (Hofmeyr, 2013). Phoenix, in Gandhi's words was "a nursery for producing the right man and the right Indian".

In order to enable everyone to make a living by manual labour, the land around the press was divided into plots of three acres each. Corrugated iron houses were built on all of them. Gandhi had wanted mud huts thatched with straw or small brick houses, but this was not possible as it would have been more expensive and would have taken more time (Gandhi, 1927). Plots were not fenced in and only paths and narrow roads separated each plot. Phoenix gradually developed into a little village with half a dozen families having settled there.

Ethics and Economics of Publishing

By 1905 *Indian Opinion* had expanded from 8 pages to 36 pages with its major objective being to mould public opinion. It included essays, views and opinions from writers and intellectuals across the world, but generally through some other publications. In other words, news in *Indian Opinion* was more a flow of opinion drawn from other papers rather than a reporting of events. Writings of many European and Indian authors were included in it. Gandhi made it a practice to acquaint his readers with books that had impressed him. He published summaries, paraphrases or translations of these books. Many were serialised in its pages, including his own *Hind Swaraj*, his abridged translation of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* and a biography of Socrates (Desai, 2009).

Gandhi involved himself in all levels of press work, giving instructions on how much type to order, recommending time and stress management strategies for the staff, debating upon how to arrive at a charge for advertisements, what size the advertisements should be, how best to split Gujarati words and how to design letterheads (Hofmeyr, 2013).

A little over two years after its advent, *Indian Opinion* became the largest circulated weekly to be distributed by the postal department in

Durban. Initially the paper was funded by sales, advertisements and commercial printing in the IPP. In 1910 Gandhi decided to stop all job printing in IPP, seeing this as a distraction from the real work of producing the newspaper and its associated pamphlets. In the same year, he also began scaling back on advertisements. In its first issue, *Indian Opinion* had made an all-out effort to secure advertisements but these gradually decreased. Questions arose about the nature of advertisements to be accepted and rejecting unsuitable ones also became a problem. Gandhi began scaling back on advertisements, allowing, more space to be devoted to articles and essays (Desai, 2009).

Irrespective of the financial problems which had continued to plague *Indian Opinion*, Gandhi had always been uneasy about having advertisements in the journal or doing job work in the press. These, he thought, made it a 'commercial' or 'business' concern, thus taking away the character of being purely an instrument for the service of the community. In 1912 he decided to dispense with virtually all advertisements except those promoting socially useful objects, especially books. He announced this major change in the policy regarding advertisements in *Indian Opinion:* "We have also come to the conclusion that, consistently with our ideals we could not accept advertisements for paying our way. We believe that the system of advertisement is bad in itself, in that it sets up insidious competition...and often lends itself to misrepresentation on a large scale" (Gandhi, 1912a: 326).

Gandhi's economics was clearly not to earn the most out of each page of his newspapers but to give the maximum possible to his readers. His perception that journalists were often tempted to compromise the truth by favouring the wealthy and the powerful, also had an impact on the question of the funding of newspapers through advertisements or sponsorships (Gonsalves, 2010). He pointed out that sellers praised their goods in the advertisements. They paid for their publication because they increased their sales. He explained that it was wrong to advertise those products that they themselves did not use and considered as undesirable (Desai, 2009).

As Vilanilam (2005) points out, Gandhi felt that it was wrong to create a desire for such products in the minds of their readers. Moreover, advertisements cost money, thus enhancing the price of the product. He

maintained that editors of newspapers whose aim was service to the community should not yield to the pressure of advertisement support since this would tie their hands and make them subservient to big business. If a new and useful product came to the market, editors should write about it and make people aware of its usefulness to society. His views on advertising were thus in agreement with his views on limiting wants. A society that believed in acquiring goods or saw goods as status symbols was not, in his view, an ideal society. He argued that most advertisements resulted from an unhealthy competition to win customer preference for luxury items which the large majority of the population could not afford to buy. He felt that advertising increased the purchase price of products and services and thus became a burden to the average citizen. Vilanilam (2005) argues that Gandhi thus anticipated John Galbraith, who raised questions about the wastefulness of advertising in his 1958 book, *The Affluent Society and* suggested that money spent on advertising could be diverted to the betterment of poorer sections of the community.

Gandhi also perceived copyright laws as a form of private property that prevented the free circulation of ideas. Two of the pamphlets produced in IPP specifically stated: "No rights reserved". Hofmyer (2013: 67) points out that in following this policy "Gandhi was in effect seeking a way of operating not only beyond the constraints of the market but of the state as well".

Unto This Last and Gandhi's Personal Transformations

Fischer (2008) argues that Gandhi himself had been ready for a back-to-nature move and Ruskin gently pushed him towards this decision. Gandhi's reading of the book certainly helped him to crystallise and give expression to his own ideas. As he himself wrote: "Great Britain gave me Ruskin, who's *Unto This Last* transformed me overnight from a lawyer and city dweller into a rustic living away from Durban on a farm, three miles from the nearest railway station" (Tendulkar, 1962a: 142).

Gandhi wanted to eventually stop working in the legal profession and earn his daily living by working on the farm and with the newspaper but he was called back to Johannesburg to take care of urgent business. As the newspaper and the new settlement depended on his earnings, he had no choice but to return and continue to spend much of his time in the city

(Marcello, 2007). However, he introduced as much austerity in his home as he could. His house in Johannesburg was managed on the basis of the same principles of simple living, self-reliance and manual labour as in Phoenix. He walked 12 miles a day to his office and back. Phoenix Settlement and *Indian Opinion* were Gandhi's personal property in the sense that they were established out of his own income. In 1911 Gandhi decided to renounce all his ownership rights and to put them into a Trust. The ownership of Phoenix, its land and machinery was transferred to five trustees, these being the merchant Omar Hajee Amod Johari of Durban, the merchant Parsee Rustomjee of Durban, the architect and farmer Hermann Kallenbach of Johannesburg, the Barrister-at-Law Lewis Walter Ritch of Johannesburg and the Barrister-at-Law Pranjivandas Jugjivan Mehta of Rangoon. The deed was published in *Indian Opinion* of 14 September 1912. It also listed eight aims based on which the settlement was to be run, of which the third point clearly stated: "To follow and promote the ideals set forth by Tolstoy and Ruskin in their lives and works". The last point further emphasised the objective "to conduct the said *Indian Opinion* for the advancement of the ideals mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs" (Gandhi 1912b: 322). The editorial of the same issue of *Indian Opinion* stated that the trust deed which was under the course of registration, marks a step forward. Gandhi thus ceased to be the sole legal owner of the IPP.

Ruskin's *Unto This Last* and the establishment of Phoenix contributed to the transformation in Gandhi's life, providing an impetus towards simplicity and setting him free from the constraints of money and property. Phoenix was Gandhi's first decisive step towards a policy of voluntary poverty (Bhattacharya, 1969). It was an experiment in alternative economics and a model for later experiments like the Tolstoy farm near Johannesburg, Satyagraha Ashram in Sabarmati and Sevagram in Wardha in India. Ruskin's idea of a simple life touched Gandhi so deeply that throughout his life, his attempt was to lead the simplest possible life (Desai, 2009). Ruskin was thus not only the main source of Gandhi's economic philosophy, but also a major catalyst for the change in Gandhi the man (McLaughlin, 1974).

In 1931, in an interview with Evelyn Wrench of the British magazine *Spectator*, Gandhi stated that it was *Unto This Last* that made him decide to change his whole outward life. Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* (25 August 1946: 96): "If mankind was to progress and to realise the ideal of equality

and brotherhood, it must adopt and act on the principle of *Unto This Last*". In the same year, when a journalist of the *New York Post* asked Gandhi if the spinning wheel had a message for America, Gandhi responded: "I stand by what is implied in *Unto This Last.* That book marked the turning point in my life. We must do even unto this last as we would have the world do by us. All must have equal opportunity. Given the opportunity, every human being has the same possibility for the spiritual growth. That is what the spinning wheel symbolises" (Tendulkar, 1962b: 239). It should be remembered that this was written 42 years after his first encounter with Ruskin. He urged his family and acquaintances as well as the readers of his newspapers to read Ruskin.

Conclusion

Although the exact extent of the influence of Ruskin on Gandhi is debatable, it is undisputed that many of Gandhi's basic concepts such as the dignity of labour, the use of machinery, justice based on fellow feeling, trusteeship, priority of care for the poor, the importance of social responsibility and moral political economy, emphasis on human needs, the importance of primary education and the education of both boys and girls had their roots in Ruskin (Diwan and Lutz, 1985).While the setting up of the Phoenix Settlement was an immediate outcome of reading Ruskin, the impact of *Unto This Last* continued until Gandhi's last days. He went further than Ruskin by putting into practice what Ruskin himself failed to do in his own life. *Unto This Last* became for Gandhi a blueprint for community life and for the radical concept of Sarvodaya (Nanda, 2004). As Thomson (1993) points out, Gandhi's response to John Ruskin is the best example of his reinterpretation and adaption of another person's philosophy.

Dantwala (1995: 2795) writes: "The "quintessence of Ruskin's and Gandhi's thought is fully reflected in the title of Ruskin's *Unto This Last.* The empathy for the most disadvantaged individuals and groups should mould our economic and social philosophy, politics, social behaviour and provide the basic values for their formulation...It is this concern for the downtrodden – the *daridranarayan*– that gives Ruskin and Gandhi's thought its universal relevance in all climes and climate". This is particularly true in today's context of a globalised world with its widening economic

inequality, where the concept of the 'welfare of all' cannot be more relevant. Furthermore, Gandhi's concept of equality of labour, as derived from Ruskin, continues to be of relevance today where manual labour is still looked down upon.

Gandhi's economics was an integral part of his philosophy and very much indebted to Ruskin. The whole experiment of the Phoenix Settlement with all its intricacies, its transformation into a Trust, the running of *Indian Opinion*, Gandhi's views on advertising, copyright, science and technology, all reflect Ruskin's influence on him. While this influence was inherent in him throughout his life, it was his experiments and writings on the Phoenix Settlement that made this explicitly evident. Reflections from Phoenix reveal the basic Gandhian perspective of the inseparability of ethics from economics and his efforts to make this ideal a reality.

References

Bhattacharya, B. (1969). *Gandhi the Writer.* New Delhi: National Book Trust.

Dantwala, M.L. (1995). "Gandhiji and Ruskin's *Unto This Last.*" *Economic and Political Weekly,* I30(44): 2793-2795.

Desai, N. (2009). *My Life is My Message: I Sadhana.* Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.

Dhawan, G. (1990). *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.* New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation.

Diwan, R., & Lutz, M. (1985). *Essays in Gandhian Economics.* New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation.

Fischer, L. (2008). *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi.* London: Harper Collins.

Gandhi, M.K. (1895). "Band of Vegetarian Missionaries." *The Vegetarian,* reproduced in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Vol.1, pp. 222-228). New Delhi: Government of India.

Gandhi, M.K. (1906). "Letter to Private Secretary to Lord Elgin." *Indian Opinion*, reproduced in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Vol. 6,pp. 196-202). New Delhi: Government of India.

Gandhi, M.K. (1909). "Mr. Polak and his Work."*Indian Opinion,* reproduced in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Vol. 9, pp. 274-275). New Delhi: Government of India.

Gandhi, M.K. (1912a). "Ourselves." *Indian Opinion,* reproduced in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* (Vol.11, pp. 325-326).New Delhi: Government of India.

Gandhi, M.K. (1912b). "The Phoenix Trust Deed." *Indian Opinion,* reproduced in

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (Vol.11, pp. 320-325). New Delhi: Government of India.

Gandhi, M.K. (1919). "Swadeshi v. Machinery." *Young India,* reproduced in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Vol.16, pp.134-135). New Delhi: Government of India.

Gandhi, M.K. (1927). *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth.* Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House.

Gandhi, M.K. (1946). "Speech at Industries Ministers Conference", *Harijan,* reproduced in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Vol.85, pp.95-98). New Delhi: Government of India.

Gandhi, M.K. (1956). *Ruskin: Unto This Last: A Paraphrase.* Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House.

Gandhi, R. (1997). *The Good Boatman: A Portrait of Gandhi.* New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Ghosh, B.N. (2012). *Gandhian Political Economy: Principles, Practice and Policy.* New Delhi: Ane Books.

Gonsalves, P. (2010). *Clothing for Liberation: A Communication Analysis of Gandhi's Swadeshi Revolution.* New Delhi: Sage.

Hardiman, D. (2005). *Gandhi: In his Time and Ours.* New Delhi: Permanent Black.

Hofmeyr, I. (2013). *Gandhi's Printing Press: Experiments in Slow Reading.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kulkarni, S. (2012). *Music of the Spinning Wheel: Mahatma Gandhi's Manifesto for the Internet Age.* New Delhi: Amaryllis.

Marcello, P.C. (2007). *Mohandas Gandhi: A Biography.* New Delhi: Greenwood Press and Atlantic Publishers.

McLaughlin, E. (1974). *Ruskin and Gandhi.* Bucknell, PA: Bucknell University Press.

Mishra, A.D., & Narayanasamy, S. (2009). *World Crisis and the Gandhian Way.* New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

Nanda, B.R. (2004). *In Search of Gandhi: Essays and Reflections.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Nayar, S. (1989). *Mahatma Gandhi: Satyagraha at Work.* Vol. IV.}Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House.

Rao, K.R. (2017).*Gandhi's Dharma.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Ruskin, J. (1849). *The Seven Lamps of Architecture.* London: Smith, Elder and Company.

Ruskin, J. (1851). *The Stones of Venice.* London: Smith, Elder and Company.

Ruskin, J. (1868). *The Political Economy of Art.* London: Smith, Elder and Company.

Ruskin, J. (1883). *Unto This Last: Essays on the Principles of Political Economy.* New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

Ruskin, J. (1891). *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain.* Philadelphia, PA: Reuwee, Wattley and Walsh.

Ruskin, J. (1894). *Sesame and Lilies.* London: George Allen.

Ruskin, J. (1895). *The Crown of Wild Olive.* Philadelphia, PA: Henry Altemes

Tendulkar, D.G. (1962a). *Mahatma: Life of Mahatma Gandhi, 1940-45.* Vol.VI. New Delhi: Government of India.

Tendulkar, D.G. (1962b). *Mahatma: Life of Mahatma Gandhi, 1945-47.* Vol. VII. New Delhi: Government of India.

Thomson, M. (1993). *Gandhi and His Ashrams.* Mumbai: Popular Prakashan.

Vilanilam, J.V. (2005). *Mass Communication in India: A Sociological Perspective.* New Delhi: Sage.