

Beyond Philanthrocapitalism: The Gandhian Alternative

Towards a Non-Violent Giving



I. OVERVIEW

- **Philanthrocapitalism** may be understood as a **marketised model of philanthropy** that uses business methods (Bishop, 2007) to pursue large-scale transformations through market-based solutions.
- This research uses **Gandhi's articulation(s) of Ahimsā** (non-violence, or non-dualism) as an epistemological and ontological foundation for an **alternative philanthropic imaginary**, beyond the limits of philanthrocapitalism.
- It finds in Gandhi a 'position of exteriority' (Mukherjee 2000) that can at once recognise, interrogate, and transcend both the **violence of philanthrocapitalism** and the eurocentrism in its academic critique.



Philanthrocapitalism is viewed as an ideological instrument entrenched in the excesses of capitalism, [*'Crisis Capitalism'*, Jared Rodriguez / Image Source: Truthout]



The 'charkha' (spinning wheel) as a metaphor for epistemological resistance in Gandhi's indictment of modernity. [*'Gandhi Spinning'* / GandhiServe. Image Source: Wikimedia Commons]

III. APPROACH AND METHODS

- **'Thinking across traditions'** (Banerjee, Nigam and Pandey 2016), this research will draw on Gandhi's conceptual universe as a methodological premise: reflexivity, **dialogic humility**, and **self-reform** as the moral conditions of research.
- It will use as its primary methods: (a) **textual analysis** based on the Hermeneutic and Sociology of Knowledge traditions, and (b) **case studies** of select philanthrocapitalist foundations in India.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

- Re-centring philanthropic 'objects' as theoretical and normative agents, this research will **inform philanthropic practice** through a reappraisal of knowledge asymmetries in giving.
- It will open conversations on **newer axiologies** that can inform not only philanthropy but also **business thinking**. As such, the research will contribute towards **democratising the theoretical toolkit** of philanthropy and business research.
- It will also stimulate **further research** on emerging philanthropic imaginaries in India and the Global South.



Ahimsā presumes both self-knowledge and self-reform, for an ethical recognition of the other. [*'The Bird of Self-Knowledge'*, Tyrolean Folk Art / Image Source: Wikimedia Commons]

II. CONTEXT AND RESEARCH FOCUS

- There is a growing recognition of the **limits of philanthrocapitalism** in academic literature.
- Critics highlight its: (i) conflation of philanthropy with capitalism or public good with private gain (Jenkins 2011); (ii) turn to technocratic, business-like, managerialist methods (Ramdas 2011); (iii) hegemonic legitimisation of the neoliberalism (Nickel and Eikenberry 2009).
- There has however been **little inquiry into its articulations in the Global South**. The latter is seen as a site for demonstrating the violence of philanthrocapitalism but remains **divested of normative and epistemological agency**.
- This research seeks to understand the **contemporary negotiations of philanthrocapitalism in India**, while turning to **Gandhi's conceptual universe** as a source of another ontology and epistemology of giving.



Malinowski among the Trobrianders / Histories of knowledge and development remain deeply implicated in those of alterity, and epistemological othering and 'disfranchisement' (Hoppers 2015). [*'Ethnographer'*, London School of Economics Library Archives]

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