



*In India, Lord Krishna is also known as "Govinda", because he is part of and moves through all the worlds, giving them power. Lord Vishnu is also called "Govinda", because he took the part of the earth which had sunk into the netherworld, and restored it.*

*"By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it."*

*-- Adam Smith*

Adam Smith's quote above is part of the foundation of modern economics. But what happens when someone pursues a self-interest in such a way that he perverts the government and laws of his people to attain his self-interest? What if someone's self-interest is not the acquisition of wealth, but of power?

While we like to think people will behave themselves in the world, we must face the fact that souls do corrupt from time to time and, in doing so, destroy the property, liberty, and lives of fellow human beings.

In Ram Gopal Varma's film, *Sarkar*, we can explore the economics of power and the corruption that goes along with it. The word, "sarkar", means "the incumbent government". We begin with a list of the main characters and their situations...

**SARKAR SUBHASH NAGRE** - The chief "fixer" of the poor neighborhoods of Mumbai. He rules with an iron fist, but his rule is seen as fair and wise. He is a very difficult man to fight, so most politicians and policemen defer to his decisions. He lives according to a law of his own.

**VISHNU NAGRE** - Subhash's playboy son. He sees power as a means of self-gratification. He lives in his own way, but not according to any law.

**SHANKAR NAGRE** - Subhash's younger son, returned from America. He has been sheltered from his father's business and seems content to remain on the outside of things.

**POOJA** - Shankar's girlfriend from America. Her father does not approve of Subhash's business.

AVANTI - Subhash promised her father she would wed Shankar one day. She's in love with Shankar. She has no problem with Subhash's business.

CHIEF MINISTER RATHOD - The highest government official in Mumbai, but he must still get approval from Subhash on city policies, if he wishes to keep his job.

KHURANA - A developer who wishes to build homes for the wealthy in a poor neighborhood after displacing the poor who live there. Subhash opposes this plan.

COMMISSIONER VISHRAM - He used to work for Subhash, but is now a city commissioner under Rathod. He does not like Subhash, but remains friendly to Vishnu.

SELVA MANI - Another "boss" of Mumbai. He's powerful, but not as powerful as Subhash Nagre.

RASHEED - A businessman, concerned with profits and his own self-interests. What could be wrong with that?

SWAMI - A "hired gun" used by Nagre's opponents to plot against him.

1. What function does Sarkar Nagre serve? Does his existence represent a failure in government? Why or why not?
2. Why do the police not interfere as Sarkar's men beat Booshan?
3. Other than cuss in front of his kid, what else has Vishnu done that angers his father, Subhash?
4. What does Subhash Nagre mean when he says to Selva Mani, "... while counting the short term gains, one shouldn't lose sight of the long term damages"?
5. Why does Selva Mani change his mind so quickly when talking with Subhash Nagre?
6. What sort of business is Rasheed in? Is it really that obvious? Why is it that obvious?
7. Why does Subhash Nagre interfere in so many business dealings?
8. Is it wrong for Subhash Nagre to be above the law? Why or why not?
9. What does Vishram see in Rasheed's deal?
10. What does Swami mean when he says one must kill Sarkar's philosophy?
11. Khurana proposes a legitimate business deal. Why does Sarkar Nagre oppose it?

12. Why does Vishnu advocate punishing Khurana when Subhash advocates tolerance?
13. Why does the crowd riot after Khurana is killed?
14. Why does Vishram send the video to Vishnu?
15. Why does Subhash turn against his own son, Vishnu?
16. What does it mean when the "Govinda" chant is playing?
17. Why does Rathod turn against Sarkar Nagre?
18. Why does Subhash submit to the authority of the police? Wasn't he above the law? What's going on, here?
19. Speaking of "not profiting", how is it Subhash has so many guys working for him and all them nice cars? What more is going on here?
20. Why doesn't the police captain protect Subhash?
21. Why does Shankar go to Selva Mani? What does he hope to get from him?
22. Why does Khan Saab make the sacrifice he does? How does that serve his self-interest? Was it a bad economic decision? Or does it fall under the law of diminishing marginal utility?
23. Why does Selva Mani have a panic attack? Does that help the situation he's in?
24. Why doesn't Shankar save himself and get out of Mumbai?
25. Why do the people seem to be devoted to Subhash Nagre?
26. Why does Shankar choose to marry Avanti when he loves Pooja?
27. What is Swami's plan to salvage the situation?
28. Is Vishnu acting in his own self-interest (as far as he's aware) in this case? Why or why not?

29. Does Subhash Nagre act in his own self-interest in accepting Vishnu back into his home? Why or why not?
30. Is Vishnu acting in his own self-interests when he makes his phone call? Why or why not?
31. Is Shankar's next action an economically sound one? Why or why not?
32. In the action at the climax, are the killings motivated by revenge, justice, passion, or pure political and/or economic necessity? Explain your answer.
33. Does Swami's decision at the end make economic sense? Why or why not? Does it make him moral? Why or why not?
34. When Rathod is confronted at the end, we see the endgame of a power struggle. Between Rathod, the elected, and the Nagre family, the unelected, who is the truly representative government of Mumbai? Who protects their property, liberties, and lives most effectively and fairly? Explain your answer.
35. In the end, whose pursuit of self-interests benefited the society as a whole? Why?
36. In the end, whose pursuit of self-interests either harmed or would have harmed society as a whole? Why?
37. Can a government corrupted by those greedy for power provide justice and protection? If not, then how does one keep government free of such persons?
38. What are the moral obligations, if any, of those with great power and/or wealth? Why do you draw that conclusion?
39. Which power was abused more, the government's or Sarkar's? Why do you draw that conclusion?
40. Re-read Adam Smith's quote at the beginning of the assignment. Discuss your thoughts on it as they relate to this film. Consider your own government and economic environment. Is it corrupted or does it serve your interests fairly? How can you tell if it is corrupt or fair? What are the benefits and costs of living in a corrupted, unfair environment? Realistically, is there any way to limit, if not end, corruption? Explain your answer.