

## Mahatma Gandhi's Concept of Hind Swaraj

Dr. Manoj Kumar

*Prof. Colony, Durgasthan, Katihar(Bihar)*

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### ABSTRACT

Hind Swaraj presents an alternative to Karl Marx and Adam Smith. This book accepts equality and freedom as the foundation of a moral order. If equality and freedom are truths than non violence only can be their practical realization. Nonviolence to Gandhi was therefore the means to achieve Swaraj. At a time when people are facing the challenges of violence insecurity ecological disaster unsustainability and civilizational conflicts sanity demands that we seek guidance from the teachings of Gandhi as encapsulated in Hind Swaraj. In the Hind Swaraj Mahatma Gandhi proposes a non-violent society as an alternative vis-à-vis Karl Marx and Adam Smith the explication of which is the Hind Swaraj. When Gandhiji proposes swadeshi technology as an alternative he is also proposing employment opportunity with increase in production. The natural corollary of Hind Swaraj is struggle against injustice and exploitation against expansion of capitalism economic and cultural imperialism. However, the theme of Hind Swaraj is not just the moral inadequacy and extravagant pretensions of modern civilization but its treacherously deceptive, hypnotic and self-destructive tendency. In order to achieve Swaraj Gandhi presented a 19-point programme of action entitled Chhutkara in Gujarati, which means the "emancipation or liberation".

Hind Swaraj presents an alternative to Karl Marx and Adam Smith. This book accepts equality and freedom as the foundation of a moral order but not as a distant outcome but in the very process of arriving at it. It is for this reason that Gandhi seeks a change in the social order not through talking control of the order but by changing its very process. In fact a free and equal society is a non-violent society, a satyagrahi society, for truth and non-violence ultimately are two faces of the same coin, or we can say that non-violence is the behavioral form of truth. If equality and freedom are truths than non violence only can be their practical realization.

With a view to providing a more meaningful understanding of Freedom, Gandhi re-defines it in terms of Swaraj, "a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint, which independence often means". For a person with a nonviolent mindset, freedom means freedom from unrestrained desires and wants. Nonviolence to Gandhi was therefore the means to achieve Swaraj. In the present time we are witnessing irrevocable destructive consequences of such ways of life which are being followed in the name of freedom and progress. Gandhi offers in the vision and methods of Swaraj a harmonious, healthy, fearless, just, equalitarian, aesthetic and progressive way of life.

At a time when people are facing the challenges of violence, insecurity, ecological disaster, unsustainability and civilizational conflicts, sanity demands that we seek guidance from the teachings of Gandhi as encapsulated in Hind Swaraj.

He suffixed it with "Hind" because he was struggling for India's freedom, but what he writes in Hind Swaraj is for all seekers of justice and freedom, not only for themselves but for all, and who are desirous of attaining their own Swaraj or liberation.

In *the Hind Swaraj* Gandhiji emphasizes three main criterion of Swaraj as follows: -----

1. Real Swaraj is self-rule or self-control.
2. The way to it is Satyagraha, passive resistance: that is Saul-force and Love-force.
3. In order to exert this force, Swadeshi in every sense is necessary.

In these postulates Mahatma Gandhi proposes a non-violent society as an alternative vis-à-vis Karl Marx and Adam Smith, the explication of which is the Hind Swaraj. In the field of economics, increase in production is not an end in itself for Mahatma Gandhi. As an economist he draws our attention to the fact that the aim of production is to fulfil our basic needs, not to create artificial demands for consumption. Even if we forget for a moment how detrimental it is for a person or a society to be caught in the web of artificial needs morally, even then, purely from the physical point of view also, for the economy and for the physical and mental well-being, the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's postulation can not be refuted. It is also worth remembering that non-covetous or sacrifice-tempered-consumption may in this context not be moral precepts only but even be an economic necessity, for covetousness and unbridled desire for artificial needs is the cause of uncontrollable demands. It is not the

denial of basic needs because Gandhi emphasized the need not only of mental but also physical health and wellbeing. Not many people know about Gandhi's statement where he says that for the poor bread and butter are the manifestations of God. In fact he even says that for the poor the economic is the spiritual. For this reason though Gandhi emphasizes the need for increase in production but for basic necessities not for artificially created demands. The preferable process of this increase in production here also for him is that which creates opportunities for employment. Our modern economists hold that increase in production cannot be achieved without adopting modern technology. But as we have already seen this technology results in jobless growth which is economically detrimental. When Gandhiji proposes swadeshi technology as an alternative he is also proposing employment opportunity with increase in production. In modern technology based production, according to Schumacher only 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>% of our social time is utilized in actual production. There can be many forms of swadeshi technology, its prime objective is only this that it gives judicious attention to human labour, locally available resources and local needs. It can also be called non-violent or satyagrahi technology for the emphasis is not on the words but on the vision that sees employment, production and actual need in one continuum of non-violence. For this reason the primary aim is to choose that technology that becomes the foundation of our economic processes for eventually that will be that foundation for the structuring of the society as well.

Diwakarji is, therefore, right when he says that is is not only necessary to experiment with truth in our own life (satya sodhanam) but also "to establish truth" in society (satya samsthapanam). Truth and non-violence were not only personal virtues but they have their societal character. Hence, non-violence without crusade against exploitation. And corruption is lifeless pacifism. *Hind Swaraj*, reflects the real spirit of Gandhism because it is all war and no peace. It disturbs the status quo at every point and at every step. Hence the natural corollary of *Hind Swaraj* is struggle against injustice and exploitation against expansion of capitalism, economic and cultural imperialism. Consumerism, militarism and the last but not the least industrialism, which is at the root of many of the vices. Hence the task beyond *Hind swaraj* was not of rewriting a second *Hind Swaraj* after studying the criticisms on this book but formulating and implementing action programmes or Chhutakara.

These utterances of Gandhi reflect his sense of commitment, hence Professor Soddy's allegation that the approach of *Hind Swaraj* was some kind of utopian vision is unjust. *Hind Swaraj* is neither like Plato's Republic or Thomas Moore's Utopia, which are examples of very fertile imagination. To some extent, it can come along with Communist Manifesto whose primary purpose was not contemplative enjoyment of the existing world but its active transformation. These are critics who regard Gandhian prescriptions as simply impracticable because they think that

various problems like unemployment, population growth, food shortage etc., could not be solved without resort to industrialization. However, recent critics of industrialization have not only gone beyond the evil effects of Urbanization rather they have reinforced many of Gandhi's apprehensions and objections which questioned the very basis of its dependence on the present-day technology.

According to Gandhi exploitation was due not only because of capitalist mode of production but also because of the very nature of present day machine technology. Hence, socialisation or nationalization was not a guarantee against exploitation. Besides, Gandhi also questioned the "values of increased productivity or "multiplication of needs" which has become the characteristic feature of modern civilization. But we must remember that "the mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge in our passions the more unbridled they become." The Indian seers, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. In fact, happiness is largely a mental condition. "A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich or unhappy because he is poor. The rich are often seem to be unhappy, the poor to be happy". It is perhaps in the spirit that the Bible says- "Blessed are the poor..." It is not perpetuating poverty in society but freeing the whole society of the limitless.

However, the theme of *Hind Swaraj* is not just the moral inadequacy and extravagant pretensions of modern civilization, but its treacherously deceptive, hypnotic and self-destructive tendency. But to call this analysis simply as subjectivistic or moralistic is unjust. In fact, it is based on sociological and psychological findings. G.D.P. Cole, who did not agree with Gandhi that "Western civilization is of necessity at enemy with human soul" admits that "Gandhi's case against the West looks infinitely stronger than it looked to us Westerners thirty years ago."

In order to achieve *Swaraj*. Gandhi presented a 19-point programme of Action entitled Chhutakara in Gujarati, which means the "emancipation or liberation". He is convinced that there is no ground for pessimism and despondency, because "only the fringe of the ocean has been polluted, if those who are within the fringe alone need cleansing." The vast majority of the farmers and village dwellers have not been polluted and they still adhere to the life-values of Indian culture.

Gandhiji had written *Hind Swaraj* after his tantalizing experiments in South Africa and his life work in India is an unfolding of the programme of action. So he said in 1921: "I am individually working for the self-rule pictured therein". It is *Hind Swaraj* which inspired him to cultivate fearlessness, non-violence and love and self-reliance and voluntary poverty. He fashioned his entire life in the light of the opinions expressed in *Hind Swaraj*.

Thus *Hind Swaraj* without Satyagraha and constructive programme is merely Utopia. Unless it is followed up immediately by some programme of action.

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