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REVIEW ARTICLE

GANDHI'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SWARAJ

Gandhi's Political Philosophy of Swaraj

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INTRODUCTION

Man has entered in the new millennium with great hope and celebrations. But he finds himself under severe strain and feels compelled to sit up and reassess his environment, nature, culture and future. Humanity is truly at the crossroads. Even the most powerful nations on the earth are living under constant shadow of terrorism. Both capitalism and socialism miserably failed in solving the problems of the masses, down-trodden and deprived section of the society. The whole world is in search of an alternative. Gandhism provides an answer. Gandhism is new hope, new force and above all a new challenge in the modern world. Infact, Gandhism becomes global necessity for peace, prosperity, freedom, harmony and survival of the whole human race.

A rediscovery of Gandhism will definitely help us find out ways and means to protest the plurality and cultural diversity of the world. There is a crisis in Indian polity. Political parties have abandoned their ideology. If we carefully analyse the manifesto of all political parties, one can come to the conclusion their policies and programmes are more or less same. Every political party irrespective to their strength and ideology. Morality has taken a hit. Here Gandhian Concept of Swaraj is needed and Gandhiji become more relevant.

Swaraj is a basic concept of Gandhian philosophy. This concept is more basic than even non-violence, a concept with which his name is universally associated. There is no doubt that he made an original contribution to the theory and practice of non-violence and that the world is grateful to him for it. The fact remains, however, that nonviolence for all its importance, is only a means to Swaraj, whereas Swaraj, according to Gandhi is "a state of being of individuals and of nations."¹

Swaraj, a Sanskrit word compounded of Swaraj and Raj, "self" and "rule" has the first meaning of "self-ruling" and the secondary meaning of "self-resplendent" or "self-luminous". Gandhiji used the term Swaraj for both the individual and the nation. By personal Swaraj it is meant rule over one's self. The

first condition which Gandhiji laid down for personal Swaraj was control over lust and says that "Swaraj is the visible immediate fruit of sacrifice."² Man cannot rule over himself without conquering the lust within him. Rule over oneself implies that there should be minimum rule of the government and the society, but it means that the individual will rule over himself in such a way that he will not come in the way of others. Nobody is anybody's enemy, everybody contributes his or her due quota to the common goal, all can read and write, and their knowledge keeps growing from day to day. The rich will use their richness wisely and usefully, and not squander them in increasing their pomp and worldly pleasures. It should not happen that a handful of rich people should live in jewelled places and the millions in miserable hovels devoid of sunlight or ventilation.³

Gandhiji used the term National Swaraj in a wider sense. National Swaraj means national self-rule and self-restraint in political, social, economic and moral fields. It is the sum total of all activities which go up to build an ideal state based on moral force. The quality and the vitality of such national Swaraj depends on the quality and the vitality of its people. The people of such state are conscious of their moral strength in its collectivity Gandhiji tried to identify his concept of Swaraj state with the Ramraj, the ideal state of Shri Rama.

Gandhi, like influential liberals of the twentieth century of the stature of Laski, equated political with economic freedom. Gandhi's model is Maggini's Italy. The basic necessities should be available to all, irrespective of status, whether prince or an ordinary wage earner. "The Swaraj of my dream" remarked Gandhi, "is the poor man's Swaraj". Not only Gandhi made a general commitment to people's welfare, but with remarkable acumen and foresight he also prepared a blue print for rejuvenating the moribund Indian society and life.

Gandhiji proclaims that "Real Swaraj" will come not by acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is

¹ Anthony J. Parel, Gandhi. Freedom and Self-Rule, (ed.), Vistaar Publication, New Delhi. P. 1

² Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 26, 24 January, 1922-12 November, 1923, P.7.

³ Harijan, 25 March, 1939, Vol. 7., P. 65.

abused. In other words Swaraj is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.⁴ For achieving this, is people should be educated so that they can regulate and control authority. Gandhiji, like Plato and Mill, placed enormous importance on education as a precondition to the enjoyment of democratic freedom and the ability to fulfill obligations. The concept of Swaraj was to be achieved through non-violence, production of Khadi on mass scale by men and women living not only in towns, but in Lakhs of for-flung villages, boycott of government and government-aided institutions, courts and councils and picketing of wine, opium, ganja and toddy shops. Gandhiji also laid emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity and thus sought the support of each community during the long- drawn struggle for independence. As the preceding analysis corroborates, Gandhian Swaraj is not narrow nationalism or Chauvinism, but is "Consistent with the broadest good of humanity at large".

On the pillars of truth and non-violence Gandhiji erected a political, economic, moral and social structure. His entire thinking was based on the ethical vision in which individual had the central position. He did not agree with the views that material advancement leads to moral development. He stated, "if inward change is achieved, outward change take care of itself."⁵ At political level, he dismissed liberal democracy as a fish market, parliament a prostitute in which people complete for this own-self interest. He believed in the qualitative and not quantitative aspect of democracy. He visualized Swaraj at the individual level, Gram Swaraj at the local level and Sarvodaya, at Global level. At ethical level, there is much degradation of ethical norms and moral principles in our life. The corruption has rampant in our society. Moral values has been commercialized. We have almost reached a point where people have lost faith in the integrity of the rulers. So, to remove this antagonism the moral basis of development is required which lies in truth, non-violence, non-possession, bread labour, fearlessness, Swadeshi, toleration of faith, nature care and simplicity of life.

According to Gandhiji, today we dichotomies life into exclusive compartments of politics, economics, society and religion which are devoid of morality. There is lack of harmony between man and man, class and class, nation and nation and among man, nature and society. Consequently our present miseries are mainly due to the lack of holistic approach. When we realized that the world is mutual, interdependent, co-operative enterprise, there we can built a Nobel environment so, there is need for this type of study which can be a substitute for the maladies of present challenges.

⁴ M.K. Gandhi, *Indians of My Dreams*, (compiled by R.K. Prabhu) Navajivan Publishing House, Ahamedabad, 2001, P,7.

⁵ J.D. Sethi, *Gandhi Today*, Vikash Publishing House, New Delhi, 1978, P. 24.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is plethora of literature on Mahatma Gandhi and his concept of Swaraj. Here an attempt has been made to compile the same from the available sources like books journals, magazines, newspapers etc. and a critical analysis has been done in the succeeding pages.

*Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*⁶ written by Gandhiji gives the essence of" principles like truth,, non-violence, purity of means, simplicity, Satyagraha, Swaraj, Swadeshi, village industries etc. Modern civilization has no place for self restraint, which was extremely important for Gandhiji, the book is a sneer condemnation of the modern civilization and presents Gandhian ideas about the alternative. The *Hind Swaraj* lays emphasis on that a country is not nearly a geographical configuration but it consists of its people both rich and poor and patriotism means welfare of all the people.

Sadiq Al's book, *The Vision of Swaraj*⁹ is a collection of thirty three recent articles on varied subjects by a veteran freedom fighter of the Gandhian -era. The writer has keenly observed the developments all through the years in apparent from these articles. By virtue of his close association with the leaders and deep involvement in policy framing he is rightly in a position to evaluate the present situation existing in India authoritatively.

Ramshray Roy's work, *Gandhi Soundings in Political Philosophy*⁷ demonstrates how the whole conventional thought and based upon the concept of unlimited progress has become pathetically irrelevant, and how the Gandhian ideas prove adequate to the complese

problems the world is confronting today. The book takes up certain key issues in political philosophy such as man and society, Hind-Swaraj, freedom and order, organization and community and Religion and Nation, and shows how Gandhi with his unique world view offers entirely new approaches to them.

Anthony J. Parel's book *Gandhi. Freedom and Self-Rule*⁸ presents an original account of Mahatma Gandhi's four meanings of freedom: as sovereign national independence, as the political freedom of the individual, as freedom from poverty, and as the capacity for self rule or spiritual freedom. Gandhi taught human well being, both for individual and fore the collective, requires the simultaneous enjoyment of all four of these aspects. In this volume, seven

⁶ M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Navajivan Publishing house, Ahamedabad, 1946.

⁷ Ramshary Roy, *Gandhi Sounding in Political Philosophy*, Chanakya Publications, Delhi, 1984.

⁸ Anthony J. Parel, *Gandhi Freedom and Self Rule*, (ed.) Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 2002.

leading Gandhi scholars write on the four meanings of Gandhian freedom engaging the reader in the on going debates in the East and the west and contributing to a new comparative political theory.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse the historical perspectives of the concept of Swaraj.
2. To analyse the Gandhian Concept of Swaraj to obtaining freedom and then reconstructing in the Indian society.
3. To analyse how the Gandhian Concept of Swaraj was adopted by constitution makers after independence.
4. To analyse the implementation of Swaraj after independence.
5. To analyse how far we are successful to obtaining Swaraj after independence.
6. To analyse the relevance of Gandhian Concept of Swaraj in reconstruction of contemporary Indian polity.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

Indian polity is known for three C's that is Castism.

Communalism and corruption. Gandhiji provided an alternative and he always stood for transparency legitimacy and responsive administration. This study will cover the views of Gandhiji about Swaraj and 'generally it will include the problems which persist and ones rear their ugly heads in Indian polity. Besides, this research work will also study, how the solution of these problems will be possible in Gandhian concept of Swaraj. The origin of the concept of Swaraj and theoretical and pragmatic dimensions of Swaraj will also be studied. The concluding section seeks to underscore the continuing relevance of Gandhian Swaraj of comparing that notion with, or profiling it against, significant recent initiatives in Western ethical and political thought. Above all the study will also help in resolving the present problems on the basis of various dimensions like political, social and economic philosophy of Gandhiji. Last but not least the study will also analysis how the Gandhian concept of Swaraj will be useful in reconstructing the contemporary Indian polity.

METHODOLOGY:

This research will be based on library research. content analysis and desk research. For this purpose the primary and secondary both the sources will be used. The primary sources include the writings of

Mahatma Gandhi. his speeches, D.G. Tendulkar's volume. Manubhan's diaries. Mahadev Desais diaries, collected works of Mahatma Gandhi. Young India. Harijan and Indian opinion. The secondary sources will be the books and other commentary written by other authors on the subject.

The present study will take the aid of a methodological approaches, such as the historical, comparative, descriptive - cum - analytical. Historical approach would be helpful to understanding conceptual framework of Swaraj. Through analytical method Gandhian meant for Swaraj will be evaluated. Different dimensions such as political, economic, social and spiritual are also be studied. Comparative method would be useful to understand these various dimensions of Swaraj. These methods will also be used for collecting and analysing the data.

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