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The Voice of Colonized in M.K. Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*

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Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is a new perspective, the voice of the marginalised or oppressed and dispossessed for Swadeshi or Home or National Independence. We can see in the work of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*. In this paper we can find Gandhi's thought about Swaraj or Home Rule, National Independence, ancient, history and politics. Further we can see that how India has marginalised in the various aspects of education, literature and language by British and Gandhi's experience with British Imperialism and Education. *Hind Swaraj* depicts and analysis, by contrast, examines how colonial empires and modern states invaded and now occupy most of the world and it predates and continues to resist the spread of the 'modern state or Nation.

Keywords: Colonized, marginalised, oppressed, M. K. Gandhi, History, Politics, economic, English education, Nation, State, Swaraj, Home Rule, and Independence.

The term *Swaraj* world indicates for indigenous right from the British Empire. Gandhi says in *Hind Swaraj* that there is a home rule wave passing over India. All our countrymen appear to be pining for national independence. Indians seem to be eager to acquire rights.

Gandhi then moves to history of India and how our forefathers sacrifice making India independence nation. Dadabhai, the Grand old Man of India prepared the soil (Gandhi 15), Mr. Hume has written, how he has lashed us into action, and with what effort he has awakened us (ibid 15) and Sir William Wedderburn has given his body, mind and money to the same cause (ibid 15). And Professor Gokhale (ibid 15) in order to prepare the nation, embraced poverty and gave twenty years of his life (ibid 15-16) and Gandhi further says that I verily believe that whatever Professor Gokhale does, he does with pure motives and with a view of serving India and to be the pillars of Home Rule (ibid 18) another one is the latest Justice Budruddin Tyebji was also one of those who, through the Congress, sowed the seed of home rule (ibid 16). Gandhi mentioned the thought of Dadabhai's that the English had sucked our life-blood (ibid 17).

Gandhi further says what are the reasons to raise or voice of the indigenous? He says that the state between sleep and awakening must be considered to be necessary, so may the present unrest in India be considered a necessary and therefore, a proper state.

Gandhi further says that unrest is, in reality, discontent. Gandhi draws example of Mr. Hume always said that the spread of discontent in India was necessary. This discontent is a very useful thing. A king as a man is contented with his present lot, so long is difficult to persuade him to come out of it (ibid 22).

In Hind Swaraj depicts how Colonial became Empires? They (Britishers) came to our country originally for purpose of trade. Recall the company Bahadur ((ibid 31). They hold whatever dominions they have for the sake of their commerce. Their army and their navy are intended to protect it (ibid 32). It was our interested to invite them according to Gandhi “we keep the English in India for our base self-interest. We like their commerce; they please us by their subtle methods and get what they want from us (32-33). It is proved that the English entered India for the purpose of trade (ibid 33). We may see that it is in the Gandhi’s voice that they wish to convert the whole world into a vast market for their goods (ibid 33).

In this text, Gandhi’s voice of ‘being colonized’ means following and mimicry of Western Civilization. In Hind Swaraj, Gandhi says “If you want English parliament then, it will be called Englishtan not Hindustan”. In this context, there is no freedom because we are imitating them (their government). Therefore, we are still being colonized in their way. He wanted to clarify the meaning of the word ‘Swaraj’. For Gandhi, ‘Swaraj’ was the quest for self-improvement. Hind Swaraj means "Rule of Dharma" in an ideal state. Simplicity was the crux of the matter in it. Without simplicity there cannot be any ethical living and fellow feeling. Gandhi clearly felt that the modern civilization destroys ethical living as it is built on the acquisition of material wealth. The mad rush for wealth destroyed the moral fibre of the people. The acquisitive nature will retard the development of the personality of each individual. Ethical living and morality cement and bring cohesion in the society. Gandhi felt that these qualities are missing in the modern Western Civilization as it harps on acquisition of wealth by any means. Gandhi wanted that people should rediscover their ethical and moral moorings for a quality of life.

Gandhi has contrasted the condition of the government of England. He says that it is like a sterile woman and a prostitute (ibid 25). Both these are harsh terms, but exactly fit the case. That parliament has not yet, of its own accord, done a single good thin. Hence I have compared it to a sterile woman. The natural condition of that Parliament is such that, without outside pressure, it can do nothing. It is like a prostitute because it is under the control of ministers who change from time to time. Today it is under Mr. Asquith, tomorrow it may be under Mr. Balfour (ibid 25). Further he says as a matter of fact, it is generally acknowledge that the members are hypocritical and selfish. Each thinks of his own little interest (ibid 25).

Gandhi doesn’t want follow their (Western) parliament rather says that it is like a sterile woman and a prostitute (Gandhi 25) and he further says “Parliaments are really emblems of slavery” (30) realized this would not be suitable for a country like India. He advocated 'Swaraj' or 'Self-Rule' by which he meant internal governance. He

pleaded the need for internal governance (Swaraj) in his noted booklet 'Hind Swaraj' or 'Indian Home Rule' which he wrote in 1909. During the centenary year of this publication, it is appropriate to analyze his concept of Swaraj and Governance. Gandhi defined his concept of Swaraj in this work as "self-rule" or "self-control" (ibid. 90). Each individual has to attain mastery over his senses and emotions and one cannot think about Swaraj without self-rule or self-control. For Gandhi Swaraj was not a utopia, a dream or an abstract idea. It was basically a moral and ethical principle. It is something one has to experience internally. It calls for an internal transformation of the individual. Once such a transformation is achieved by an individual, it is the responsibility of that individual to persuade others also to experience it (ibid 56). We can achieve Swaraj or home rule only when we learn to rule ourselves. Therefore Gandhi argues that one needs to seek Swaraj inside. That is why Gandhi said 'It is in the palm of your hand'. In the Gandhian perspective of governance, there is a close correlation between internal and external dimensions of governance. Gandhi wanted the cultivation of internal governance to reduce the necessity of external form of governance. He believed that the best form of governance is that, which governs the least. It was a sort of enlightened anarchy.

We find that he goes on to define Swaraj in many ways according to different contexts, but he keeps referring to this seminal idea of Swaraj for the nation in different ways till the end of his life. For instance, on one occasion he affirms that we cannot have Swaraj until we make ourselves fit for it (Gandhi 43) and on another occasion he observes that the key to Swaraj lies in self-help. He further asserts the individual dimension of Swaraj by stating that it has to be 'experienced by each one for himself (Gandhi 59). Therefore, Gandhi Swaraj cannot be imposed on the people from above either by alien rule or natives. He believed that independence or Swaraj must begin at the bottom. Fred Dallmayr argues that, for Gandhi Swaraj must first be nurtured through education on the local or village level and then is to be encouraged to spread out into larger communities and the world through a series of oceanic circles. To sum up, for Gandhi Swaraj for nation does not simply means 'a collective freedom from alien rule' but it means a collective capacity of any people to live together in harmony. According to him, to attain independence for the nation also means to nurture and strengthen this capacity in the individual to live together in peace and prosperity. Gandhi's understanding for Swaraj for the nation is based on the assumption that he rejects to understand the national independence in terms of who is holding the government. For him, since people constitute the nation, its independence must also be defined in terms of people's condition. He writes in Hind Swaraj "I believe that you want the millions of Indians to be happy, not that you want the reins of Government in your hands. If that be so, we have to consider only one thing: how can the millions obtain self- rule?" (ibid 62).

Parel's an aspect of Gandhi's notion of Swaraj political freedom of the individual. He argues that the individual political freedom is often defined in terms of 'rights' in the context of western modern politics and Gandhi too does the same. But Parel also

believes that this does not make Gandhi a rights theorist in the western sense of the term. He says that Gandhi's defence of freedoms and rights is based on his view of human nature, which he borrows from Indian sources (Parel 9). He further adds that Gandhi has introduced two significant modifications into the theory of rights. First, he asserted that, however beneficial and necessary rights were to such well-being, they needed to be complemented by duty or dharma. Second, Gandhi made the process of securing rights in a less violent and more peaceful manner. Parel observes that this is what Satyagraha is all about (ibid 11).

It is not each individual who can achieve his/her political freedom by having right to vote, to elect representative or having right to be elected as a representative. Here participation means 'performing duty'⁷ and therefore the individual can attain his/her political freedom only by performing his or her duties towards others. Therefore, for him Swaraj as political freedom of the individual means participating in the process, by performing his/ her duty, whereby one's community exercises collective control over its own affairs to attain greatest good for all.

The aspect of Gandhi's notion of Swaraj, according to Parel, is the economic freedom of the individual and it means freedom from poverty. He says that unless poverty and unemployment are wiped out from India, he would not agree that we have attained freedom (Gandhi 72). It is also very easy to find many references from Gandhi's writings to argue that his voluntary poverty cannot be seen as an approval of poverty. In his lecture titled "Does Economic Progress clash with Real Progress?" Gandhi himself has stated "No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation." (Gandhi 274). However, for Gandhi the fulfilment of the minimum economic needs of an individual remains the prerequisite for defining economic freedom of an individual or the nation. Gandhi would prefer to define it for the individual or the nation in the way in which Ruskin has articulated it in his book '*Unto This Last*'. The influence of Ruskin and his work on Gandhi is well known. In the chapter titled *The Magic Spell of a Book* of his autobiography, he writes "Of these books, the one that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in my life was *Unto This Last*." In his paraphrasing of '*Unto This Last*', Gandhi writes

“Therefore THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others (21-22).”

Conclusion

What we have discoursed above is the Voice of the native. Indigenous culture will destroy and they will become slave in their land in the name of civilization. we are

destroying everything. Therefore, Gandhi says “In order to restore India to its pristine condition, we have to return to it. In our own civilization, there will naturally be progress, retrogression, reforms and reactions; but one effort is required, and that is to drive out Western Civilization. So, finally when we follow the way of Western method then it is called Being Colonized.

Gandhi's concept of Swaraj is not merely a form of governance. It is an all comprehensive concept encompassing all spheres of life. At the individual level, it means self-refinement or purification for higher goals of life. Politically, Swaraj is the sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. Economically, Swaraj means self-reliant and self-sufficient economy. And in the ultimate sense, it is self-rule or self-restraint aimed at moksha or salvation. In the Gandhian conception, Swaraj is freedom from all forms of control. Gandhi explained the political, economic, social and moral dimensions of Swaraj in his concept of square of Swaraj (Gandhi 10).

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