
UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION TO GANDHIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 1.2 Autonomy of Modern Indian Thought
- 1.3 Intellectual Influences on Gandhi
- 1.4 Gandhi as a Critic of the West
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- 1.6 Gandhi's Admiration of the British Institutions
- 1.7 Conclusion
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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Gandhi is one of the great activist-theoreticians of the twentieth century. His writings emerged mainly during the varied process of social, economic and political actions. As Bondurant observed, "One cannot... turn to the writings of Gandhi for a definite statement in political theory. Gandhi was a political actionist and a practical philosopher; he was not a theorist. His writings abound with inconsistencies – one result of his persistent habit of thinking in public. Whatever philosophical formulations he made were inspired by and directed towards solving of immediate problems. The unsophisticated explanations which Gandhi offered for his methods, his objectives, his policy, and creed were part of a program of action. They should not be interpreted in terms either of a theory or of practical master planning" (Bondurant, 1967, p.7). During his entire life, Gandhi wrote three book-length works. The most important, his *Autobiography* first appeared in a serialised form in one of his Gujarati journals. The other two were *Satyagraha in South Africa* and the *Hind Swaraj* (1909). Gandhi himself was conscious of the inadequacies of his writings both at the theoretical and scholarly levels. In a Socratic manner, he considered his life as his message and observed:

As a matter of fact, my writings should be cremated with my body. What I have done will endure, not what I have said and written. I have often said that even if all our scriptures perish one mantra of *Ishopanishad* was enough to declare the essence of Hinduism- but even that one verse will be of no avail if there is no one to live it (cited in Bose and Patwardhan, 1967, p.56).

Dalton observes that Gandhi formed his beliefs much before he arrived in South Africa, evident from his *Autobiography* in which he mentions his childhood experiences and lessons which helped to crystallise two of his core ideas: truth and non violence. However, South

Africa became “the laboratory of Gandhi’s experiments; it proved an excellent testing ground, since many of the problems which he later found in India occurred there in miniature” (Dalton 1982, p.134). The *Hind Swaraj* (1909) contains the idea that emerged from his experiences in South Africa.

The aim of *Hind Swaraj* was to answer the anarchists with an alternative to violence, derived from Gandhi’s earliest experiments with *Satyagraha*. Equally important is the book’s concern with the concept from which it takes its title: this is Gandhi’s first extensive statement on *swaraj*, and the ideas on it which he sets forth here provide the basis for much of his future thinking on the meaning of freedom. “*Hind Swaraj*, then, is a statement on both the method and the goal of Gandhi’s thought: *Satyagraha* and *Swaraj*” (Ibid, 136).

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

- The background to modern Indian thought
- The intellectual influences that shaped Gandhi’s thought
- Gandhi’s critique of the West and his seeking indigenous roots to explain his views

1.2 AUTONOMY OF MODERN INDIAN THOUGHT

Though the Western assessment of the ancient Indian political thought is very discouraging, it is both rich and varied. This tradition is very old beginning with the Vedic period followed by the Upanishads, the *Dharma Shastras*, Buddhist literature, *Manu Smriti*, the *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharatha* and the *Arthashastra* schools. This was followed by the advent of Islamic thought from eighth century onwards. The best flowering of Islamic political theory came during the reign of the Mughal Emperor, Akbar the Great. The major challenge to modern political theorising has been its continued search of identity in the fact of the domination of Western thought and culture, which inevitably follows the two hundred years of presence of British imperialism. In sharp contrast to many other areas of the world where imperialism destroyed all traces of indigenous cultures, traditions and even languages, the Indian society reflects continuous debate and dialogue with the West, which makes modern Indian political theory distinctive and autonomous.

This trend begins at the very inception with the writings and actions of Raja Rammohan Roy, who is the first most important political thinker of modern times after India came in contact with Western ideas and institutions. With the establishment of the Asiatic Society in 1844 under the able guidance of William Jones, the dissection of ancient Sanskrit literature begins throwing light on the rich heritage of ancient Indian civilisation. These facts are unknown to the educated Indians and act as a great stimulus in creating a new confidence. This is exemplified in the actions of Rammohan. In fact Rammohan is the first great precursor of commentators like Will Durant who rightly believed in the progress and advance of civilisation as a co-operative enterprise. This enables the modern Indian thinkers to renew and reform their own institutions in light of Western knowledge and experience without renouncing their own cultural tradition and inheritance. The path initiated by Rammohan is followed and elaborated by Kesub Chandra Sen, Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore.

Gandhi represents the culmination of this discourse. He modernises tradition by highlighting the problem of modern industrialised westernised civilisation in the *Hind Swaraj*, considered

to be the most important tract in political theory. His major success as a moderniser of tradition is possible due to the groundwork that the aforesaid earlier thinkers laid down. But the major difference between these earlier thinkers and Gandhi lay in his ability to perform a transformative criticism of many of the ideas that the earlier thinkers dealt with. In this context, two important developments deserve special mention. First, his own assessment of the earlier thinkers and reforms in which he differs considerably from many of his contemporaries. Second, he changes the very context of re-examining the content of modernisation of Hindu society, and provides a dramatically opposite interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gita* to the one that Tilak popularises. This also leads him to create a new epoch in modern political theorising by developing a theory of praxis, of unity of theory and action. From the limited context of Champaran to the later mass movements, Gandhi inaugurates a totally new kind of political discourse dealing with important concepts like the nature of truth, role of man, and a conception of an ideal state with a constructive programme for the Indian society. However, even during this period which is called the Gandhian era, the autonomy and diversity of modern Indian political theory reflects in the debates that takes place between Gandhi and the Marxists, and the Revolutionary Nationalists and a significant debate between Gandhi and Tagore. The interesting point to note about the divergence of opinion between Gandhi and Tagore is that in spite of their commitment to non-violence and search for truth, they differ in their assessment of the Indian reality and also in their critical dissection of the West.

1.3 INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES ON GANDHI

Gandhi grows to political maturity in the West, which means that his essential experience is the British experience. He exhibits considerable influence of Western thinkers like Ruskin, Thoreau and Tolstoy throughout his life. He regards Socrates as an example to emulate and even translates Plato's *Apology* in Gujarati. In basic principles of politics, he indicates a marked preference for anarchism, which essentially belongs to a radical Western tradition. In organisational matters, the Western imprint is clearly discernible in him. In matters of personal conviction like vegetarianism, some western groups and writings clearly influence him. Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism*, as Woodcock says, 'is a revelation to Gandhi for it defended in rational terms the teachings transmitted to his half-attentive mind in childhood by means of myth and precept. The dietary exercises he began under Salt's inspiration were the first of his experiments with truth'.

Gandhi acknowledges Ruskin, Tolstoy and Thoreau as exerting profound intellectual influence on him though Ruskin's *Unto This Last* transforms his life. An English friend H.S. L. Polak gives the book to him for him to read while undertaking a 24-hour journey from Johannesburg to Durban in 1904. He summarises his understanding of the book into three principles:

- 1) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- 2) That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.¹
- 3) That a life of labour, ie., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.²

The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me. *Unto This Last* made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice (Gandhi, 1954, 365).

Gandhi learns from Ruskin that an unequal social order not linked from realities of labour could not allow for the possibility of non-violence. Like Ruskin, he also believes in restricting wealth and placing tools in the hands of those who could use them. Ruskin's principles inspire Gandhi to work out the basis of his concept of 'bread labour', of making the community organisation responsible for the welfare of the labourer and stress on cooperation rather than competition. These ideas are put into practice during the mill strike in Ahmedabad (Erikson, 1969). Gandhi advocates a concept of minimum living wage and proportionate equality permitting differences among individuals beyond the minimum on the basis of differing needs. Ruskin's ideas on political economy are the bedrock of the principles of Gandhi's *ashram* organisations, the Phoenix Farm, an experimental community of Indians and Europeans which also published the *Indian Opinion*³, the Tolstoy Farm of 1910 and the Sabarmati Ashram.

Ruskin influenced Gandhi's conception of soul-force as a substitute for physical force; he was the chief source of Gandhi's economic ideas; but, above all, he changed Gandhi as a person. ...Thus it was from his reading of Ruskin that Gandhi dated his renunciation of money and professional advancement, his choice of a way of life that led him eventually to call himself a farmer and weaver rather than a lawyer, and his definition of the ideals that his disciples as well as himself should embrace. It was at this time that he adopted the simple life and identified himself with the masses of the poor (McLaughlin, 1974, P.15, 18).

Tolstoy's faith in love and teachings of the *Sermon on the Mount*, the Bible and the New Testament and Thoreau's notion of civil disobedience helps Gandhi to delineate his concept of *Satyagraha*. Inspired by Thoreau, Gandhi advocates emancipation of the human being from external bondage, from self-imposed imprisonment which he terms as civilisation for it has diseased the mind and soul of a modern person.

Gandhi is as removed from the Marxist ideal of a socialist, stateless, classless utopia as he is from other Western socialist schools like the Fabian socialists and the Guild socialists. He opposes the Marxists' deterministic account of society and history, their belief in class polarisation and antagonisms, denial of God and their emphasis on violent revolutionary change. Gandhi not only emphasises gradual non-violent change but also desires to restrict the ambit of revolution and state action. Gandhi upholds private property and that society should recognise the art of creating wealth though he proposes the institution of Trusteeship based on a harmonious relationship between the capitalists and the workers. However, like the Marxists and the Socialists, he desires an egalitarian, just and non-exploitative society.

Gandhi also differs considerably from the liberals. Though he cherishes individual rights and initiatives he is not concerned with maximising freedom. Like Green, he emphasises the social nature of the human individual as "essentially a social being". The only western parallel to Gandhi may be Rousseau, for like the latter, he too idealises a glorious past but realises that since there is no going back, salvation lies in small independent self-governing, self-sufficient communities. Gandhi describes himself as a philosophical anarchist for "he envisaged the perfect society as anarchical where each individual is a law to himself, living peacefully and with goodwill towards all, controlling all his passion, and living by his own labour. It is a romantic ideal which attracted men like Rousseau and Ruskin and is opposed to the sort of social organisation idealized by Plato in the *Republic*". He prefers a society where the state would be reduced to its minimalist role. Gandhi's faith in the inherent goodness of human nature enables him to win over his enemies through persuasion. Hence the Gandhian movements remain entirely open.

1.4 CRITIC OF THE WEST

In spite of being influenced by the West, Gandhi rejects Western civilisation both as a model and as an inspiration. His vision has very little to do with the West. The *Hind Swaraj* is the primer of his political philosophy to which he remains consistently committed. He denounces Western materialism and modern technology like the railways, the telegraph, the telephone and heavy industries. He categorically rejects all the major components of the modern industrial civilisation. It is this severe indictment of the modern society that is significant and has very few parallels. In its uncompromising criticism it compares favourably with that of Rousseau's *Discourses on Inequality* (1755). Gandhi considers the advent of technology and industrialisation as the basic cause of human misery in modern society. This view crystallises during the process of industrialisation in South Africa. He hails the immense increase in productivity and consequent rise in standards of living in the West but he denies that industrialisation, in its current form, advanced human civilisation and its well-being and happiness. He rejects the Western civilisation for two reasons. First, its basis is extreme inequality and second it dehumanises and de-personalises the individual. Like Rousseau, he rejects modern technology and industrialisation because these lead to misery and inequality. He focuses on this relative fall apparent from the Italian example in the *Hind Swaraj*. In this example he specifically mentions the working class and the common people whose aspirations the ruling class ignore and Mazzini's Italy that was still in slavery. For Gandhi the content of independence is important for true freedom lay in the freedom of the working class and the poorest. Western technology and its concomitant way of life are alien to Indian traditions. It is also inadequate in fulfilling India's requirements and hinders any meaningful or real development of the individual person. As such, the ideal state would consist of self-sufficient villages and communities based on truth and non-violence.

Gandhi desires a free India that would not emulate the Western path. This means giving up machinery, modern methods of transportation, modern medicines and machine-spun cloth. Though he modifies some of his ideas subsequently like accepting small-scale industries and those industries where labour is not useful or desirable, he adheres to the overall thrust of his initial arguments as articulated in the *Hind Swaraj*. The rise and modernisation of Japan in the early part of the twentieth century had stirred emotional sentiments in India. Gandhi cites the Japanese example and instructs his Indian readers not to follow the Japanese model. The solution to the Indian problem has to come from within India rather than importing foreign ideas and institutions. Gandhi's free India is one where the economy and polity would be different from that of the other modern industrialised nations. This is because countries like India with abundant labour and large-scale unemployment and under-employment should restrict the use of machinery. He desires industrialisation that would satisfy wants like food, shelter, health care and basic education. Though conscious of the impersonal and monotonous life that industrialisation entails, he is ready to accept it if it helps to satisfy the basic human requirements.

Gandhi's attitude to the West differs considerably from other non-Western revolutionaries. Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara and Frantz Fanon not only 'rejected the Western political and economic domination but also their traditional ways of life of their own people and especially the religious elements that provided the foundation for the ancient cultures of Asia and Africa, replacing them by Western political forms and by Western technologies' (Woodcock, 1970, p.12). Fanon's perception shows some interesting contradictions into the dilemma of Third World revolutionaries. Fanon forcefully pleads for de-colonisation in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) but is utterly contemptuous of the

imperialists. He denounces the Europeans virtually as war criminals. He regards European opulence as scandalous 'for it has been founded on slavery...and that it comes directly from the soil and from the sub-soil of the underdeveloped world'. Ironically in spite of this severe indictment, Fanon conceives of change only with the indispensable help of the Europeans and by rejecting indigenous ways. Gandhi, on the other hand, wants to keep the windows of his mind open while his feet are firmly entrenched in his own culture. His entire emphasis revolves around the proposition that Indian problems should be solved by indigenous methods and not by Western ideas as these are incompatible. It is this synthetic outlook, retaining the best of the Western traditions and integrating it with indigenous roots of the Indian traditions that make Gandhi unique. There is nothing exclusively Indian about his ideas. He castigates Indians for not reforming outmoded social practices and customs and stresses on the importance of social justice and equity. A free India has to be free from the modern political and economic institutions.

1.5 A SEEKER OF INDIGENOUS ROOTS

Gandhi's conception of *Swaraj* is different to the one that is articulated by the Western Marxists, socialists or even the liberals though he assimilates their ideas. He is an ardent individualist like the liberals but his ideal is maximising individual freedom by promoting common good. Philosophically, like the anarchists, his ideal remains a society where the state plays a minimal role but he shuns their stress on revolutionary violence. Like the Marxists and socialists he desires an egalitarian society but opposes their deterministic view of history and human nature. Yet he is certain that reform would have come from within India. He desires, like Burke, to retain India's ancient heritage and modernising whatever is worth salvaging and useful. He is an anarchist, a liberal, a socialist and a conservative and yet none of these for, he never lost his profoundly revolutionary character (Bondurant, 1967, p.3). He is essentially concerned with contemporary problems and tries to find solutions that are both desirable and feasible.

Gandhi defies classification as the prophet of bourgeois nationalism in India. First, the means that he employed "are such that they will successfully end only if the masses become self-acting towards the latter part of the revolution, and the chances are that if the masses gain success through their fully developed conscious strength, they will also refuse to be exploited in future by anybody who wishes to ride upon their back. Second, Gandhi did not want India to benefit at the expense of any other nation. He considered humanity as one family. Because of this Gandhi transcended bourgeois nationalism" (Bose, 1947, pp.21-22).

This autonomous development of Gandhi's ideas represents the fullest expression of the indigenous roots of modern Indian political speculation. From Rammohan to Vivekananda, the quest has been for assimilation of the Western ideas and culture with that of the East. In the twentieth century, Tagore and M. N. Roy, along with Gandhi, portray an autonomous evolution of political discourse. All three, rooted in the Western experience, attempt to transcend it by initiating a discourse that is closer to the Indian reality. Tagore denounces the Western cult of nationalism by emphasising universality. Roy's participatory democracy is an attempt to go beyond both liberal representative democracy and authoritarian centralised communism. Gandhi uses Western concepts and ideals to critically dissect the shortcomings of India but the reconstruction of India is quintessentially Indian. Gandhi provides a comprehensive critique of Western modernity and modernisation by contesting the assumptions and conclusions of a self-confident orientalism, particularly its views about the inferiority of the East and the superiority of the modernity of the West. At the same time he rejects

readings of Hinduism as inherently fatalistic and passive and seeks to recover robust conception of autonomy and action in his tradition.

To analyse Gandhi's role in Indian transformation realistically one has to take his role as a social critic seriously. His dissection of the causes of disparity in the Indian situation led him to two conclusions: (1) imperialistic exploitation and (2) limitation of the capitalist industrialised civilisation of the west. His solution to this is in "a kind of democracy... where the gulf between the rich and the poor was not so marked, where the evils of the great cities were absent and people lived in contact with the life-giving soil and breathed the pure air of the open spaces" (Nehru, 1965, p.111). His vision of India is one "in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people, an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony".

1.6 ADMIRATION OF THE BRITISH INSTITUTIONS

The use of the technique of *Satyagraha* is also an offshoot of Gandhi's understanding of both British history and character. He was convinced that the redressal of grievances could be expected only when the people demonstrated that they were willing to suffer for getting relief. In this context, he gave the example of the British Suffragists asking the Indians in South Africa to emulate them by developing the capacity to endure suffering. The best of suffering was the yardstick by which the British conceded and Gandhi gave the example of the century long struggle for women in Britain to secure the right to vote. Many years later, he recollected that "an Englishman never respects you till you stand up to him. Then, he begins to like you. He is afraid of nothing physical, but he is mortally afraid of his own conscience, if even you appeal to it and show him to be in the wrong. He does not like to be rebuked for wrong doing at first, but he will think over it, and it will get hold of him and hurt him till he does something to put it right".

This is reinforced by the fact that though the technique of *Satyagraha* could be used everywhere and be an alternative to war in resolving conflict, yet he was also categorical, that its most effective use could be against the British. Gandhi wrote in 1904: "Earnestness commands success everywhere. It does so much more in the British Dominions. If the British machinery is slow to move, the genius of the nation being conservative, it is also quick to perceive and recognize earnestness and unity". He reflected this again in 1907, that the British would concede if the people were willing to sacrifice even their lives for the cause. But they would ignore even the genuine demands, when they were merely verbal. Even in their own country, the British follow the same principles.

Following this general principle of stages of constitutional agitation and open movements, which he followed throughout, he himself admitted that the doctrine of *Satyagraha* could be invoked only after exhausting other constitutional means of protests. But it is equally true that Gandhi, as a political strategist, was linking it to changing events in Ireland, England and India. He reminded all the time the importance of the South African struggle for India. The Indian National Congress leadership enthusiastically supported the South African struggle of the Indians and till Gandhi's return to India, it was the one issue that agitated the educated Indian mind. For Gandhi himself, the South African experience taught him two basic lessons that he implemented in India and subsequently (a) united struggle of all irrespective of caste, creed and religion and (b) the sublime importance of open non-violent struggle.

Gandhi's innate respect for the British sense of justice continued even after his return to India and during the First World War, he recruited soldiers for the British army unconditionally whereas, both Tilak and Jinnah refused to do so without any advancement of the nationalist cause. This confidence which he had in the ultimate British sense of justice was shattered by the horrors of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. However, in spite of this shock and his overall criticism of Western civilisation, and the parliamentary system, he proclaimed in 1921, that his immediate aim was parliamentary *swaraj*, whereas the rest was for a distant future. His faith in the British sense of fair play was shaken but not his faith about the feasibility of the essential mechanism of the British parliamentary institutions.

Orwell points out that much of Gandhi's struggles were confined against the British and the latter allowed him to do so and that he could never really grasp the nature of modern totalitarianism. His method would fail in more difficult situations. Orwell's point is articulated by Mehrotra too when he mentions that "the subjects of the British Empire enjoy many more civil liberties and they have greater scope for the practice of civil disobedience, non cooperation and *satyagraha*, without being branded and shot as rebels, than the subjects of any other empire in the world, both past and present" (Mehrotra, 1979, p.145). Gandhi has to be analysed from the particular to the general rather than the general to the particular. Woodcock rightly observed that, "It was perhaps of Gandhi's knowledge of the British and his skillful use of their concepts of decency as levers to move their consciences that made him so much the man for the time in India" (Woodcock, 1971, p.114).

1.7 CONCLUSION

Hegel makes an interesting point when he asserted that the world historic individuals reflect in them the real spirit of the age. Greatness and relevance of great persons, accordingly, have to be judged in the time frame of their lives and circumstances. Gandhi is no exception to the rule. He continues to hold the interest of present historians for his amazing achievement during his own lifetime in convincing the majority of the British population that imperialism and colonialism were morally wrong. Detractors normally overlook this unparalleled achievement when they blame him for many of our ills both during his lifetime and thereafter.

Gandhi's non-deterministic and skeptical outlook, based on his individualised scientific method of seeking the truth, allowed him to arrive at a larger consensus on the basis of individual judgement. He understood that no society could possibly endure in a good and meaningful way by denying individual freedom. This emphasis on the primacy of the individual led him to reject total state control for he considered it to be a person's higher moral obligation to promote common rather than aspire for mere political power. His writings as a critic of the modern society would endure just as Rousseau's have endured for the last three centuries.

Even in matters of practical utility, Gandhi's dictums remain relevant. His amazing capacity to build an all-Indian organisation, the Indian National Congress, which he sustained for the next three decades since 1920, ought to awaken us to the fact that our major failure in present times is organisational. Gandhi demonstrated that the Indians were capable of matching the British capacity of providing a unified administrative structure. He duplicated the British model of self-identity by indigenous dress, language and accountability and with a democratic process of electioneering in which no single individual became absolutely powerful or indispensable.

George Orwell, writing on Gandhi, points out that Gandhi's "whole life was sort of

pilgrimage in which every act was significant and that he enriched the world by being alive". What is revealing about Gandhi is the queer combination of a saint or a near saint with a very competent but shrewd person who could have been a very successful lawyer, administrator or businessman. Orwell does not mention the familiar things associated with Gandhi: home-spun cloth, soul-force, vegetarianism and dismisses these as medieval with little or no relevance in a backward and overpopulated country. Orwell mentions that the British officials liked and admired Gandhi because he could not be blamed for corruption, ambition in the bad sense and for the fact that his actions could not be attributed either to fear or to malice. He had no sense of inferiority and acted with the conviction that men act in good faith and that every single individual with genuine goodness makes it possible to approach every other single person. Gandhi believed in human equality and never thought in terms of race or status. His technique of *Satyagraha* is a method of defeating the enemy without preaching hatred.

Many of Gandhi's ideas have found resonance in the West and elsewhere particularly among the peace activists, environmental groups and feminists. His technique of non-violent civil disobedience has many adherents like Martin Luther King Jr., Bertrand Russell, Corazano Aquino, Petra Kelly and Vaclav Havel. Moreover the conduct of a theoretical discourse on the subject has been within the framework that he furnishes. A good example is Rawls' discussion of the subject in *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Gandhi makes Indians develop a deep pride in their heritage, customs and traditions, absorbing whatever are worth respecting and to eschew those that retard progress and moral upliftment. He rediscovers the East through the West. By incorporating whatever was worthwhile in the western experience and rooting it with respect for indigenous tradition, Gandhi has been a precursor to the current realisation of the need for universality with due respect to cultural plurality. It is this that makes Gandhi, in the Hegelian sense, a universal man. Bondurant aptly points out that conflicts are inevitable and many of them are violent. But this must not lead to an "unreasoned flight from violence" as the Gandhian experiments teach us.

1.8 SUMMARY

Gandhi is one of the great activist-theoreticians of the twentieth century. His writings emerge mainly during the varied process of social, economic and political actions. He modernises tradition by highlighting the problem of modern industrialised westernised civilisation in the *Hind Swaraj*, considered to be the most important tract in political theory. His major success as a moderniser of tradition is possible due to the groundwork that the aforesaid earlier thinkers lay down. But the major difference between these earlier thinkers and Gandhi lay in his ability to perform a transformative criticism of many of the ideas that the earlier thinkers dealt with. In spite of being influenced by the West, Gandhi rejects Western civilisation both as a model and as an inspiration. His vision has very little to do with the West. It is this severe indictment of the modern society that is significant and has very few parallels.

1.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the major intellectual influences on Gandhi?
2. Why does Gandhi criticise the West?
3. What are the reasons for Gandhi's admiration of British institutions?
4. Why is Gandhi described as a seeker of indigenous roots?

SUGGESTED READINGS

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(Endnotes)

¹ Ruskin's initial advocacy of equality of wages did not persist for in a foot-note in later editions he admitted that such was not his intention.

² This emphasis on simple living was premised on the fact that luxury was sinful under the existing conditions.

³ *Indian Opinion* was launched to establish harmonious cooperation between the Europeans and Indians in South Africa. Initially the paper was published in four languages and later in two to discuss public events and political, economic, ethical and religious ideas.

UNIT 2 **GANDHI'S VIEWS ON STATE AND CITIZENSHIP (RAMRAJYA)**

Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 2.2 Notions of State and *Swaraj*
- 2.3 Economic basis of Political Independence
- 2.4 Constructive Programme
- 2.5 Citizenship
- 2.6 Conclusion
- 2.7 Summary
- 2.8 Terminal Questions
 - Suggested Readings

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is generally agreed that one of the major consequences of the colonial rule in India is the emergence and consolidation of an overdeveloped state and a relatively underdeveloped society. This distorted development has important implications for class formation and domination in the developing societies. Richard L. Sklar points out in the context of Africa that “class relations, at bottom, are determined by relations of power, not production”. This is in total negation to the well-known Marxist theory of class consolidation on the basis of economic categories. This also means that the classification employed by the Marxists in the advanced capitalistic countries has very little practical relevance in comprehending class-based politics in post-colonial societies.

The enormity of this crucial role of the state in the developing world is reflected by the fact that the modern state is a leviathan in power, wealth and domination with regard to other societal formations, institutions and organisations. This is one major reason for the breakdown of constitutional governments in many parts of the developing world and the consequent absence of constitutionalism, civil liberties and plurality of institutions. During the period when Gandhi led the nationalist struggle in India, the colonial state had reached its zenith following Great Britain's victory in the First World War. He encountered and reacted against this state for the next three decades. Following his anarchistic leanings and his total rejection of modern industrialised civilisation of the West, he charted a new course for India by restricting the activity of the state and focusing on the grassroots development. His ideal, thereby, was far removed from the various conceptions of state projected in the Western political traditions.

Being an activist, Gandhi was also careful when making predictions and outlining his conception of an ideal state. In 1942, while replying to a query raised by Louis Fischer about the structure and the shape of the Indian society after independence, Gandhi pointed out ‘I admit that the future society of India is largely beyond my grasp’ (cited in Ganguli

1973, p.148). Gandhi devoted his energies to analysing the particular situation, innovating and modifying principles, learning from experience rather than attempting to provide a blueprint for an ideal society. His ideal remained an integral part of his vision of a society free of violence and exploitation but beyond this he refused to provide details.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

- Gandhi's notions of state and swaraj
- Gandhi's explanation of an economic basis of political independence
- His views on constructive programme and citizenship

2.2 NOTIONS OF STATE AND SWARAJ

The state, for Gandhi, represents violence in its concentrated form but is necessary since human beings are social by nature and as such morally incapable of acting in a socially responsible manner. He desires a state that would employ as little violence and coercion as possible and wanted individual actions to be regulated by voluntary efforts as far as possible. Distinguishing between state and society he opposes the notion of absolute state sovereignty in the Austinian sense. He advocates limited state sovereignty for there is an obligation higher than mere politics. His position is strengthened by his faith in individual personality evident from his remark: "If the individual ceases to count, what is left of society". Given this perception, Gandhi is generally distrustful of any increase in state power for "although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress". He prefers individual initiative and voluntary efforts. He desires the establishment of a society in which the state exists outside the daily life of the common man. The ideal society would be a decentralised one giving ample scope for self-development. It is akin to the actual reality of British society of the nineteenth century, which he saw and admired.

Gandhi's belief in the primacy of the individual led him to conceptualise a truly non-violent state composed of self-governing and self-sufficient village communities based on majority rule. It would elect district representatives who, in turn, elect provincial and national representatives. Majority rule would be subject to two constraints: first, the majority could not run roughshod on an issue on which the minority harbours strong views. Second, a human being should not act contrary to the dictates of his conscience since he is essentially a moral person. Therefore everyone has the right to engage in acts of civil disobedience against policies that are contrary to what one considers to be morally right. Political power, for Gandhi, is "the capacity to regulate material life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no state" (Young India, 2-7-1931).

A non-violent state must aim at the welfare and upliftment of its citizens. In such a state, the police would be social workers ready to use moral persuasion and public opinion to deal with anti-social elements. Crime would be treated as a disease that required understanding and help and not punishment. It would be a state free of exploitation and conflicts between

the labour and capital in industry, between the tenant and landlord in agriculture and between the city and village. These conflicts would be resolved through passive resistance and trusteeship. In such a state, property would also be regarded as evil, for excess of it encourages evils like exploitation, sensual indulgence and contempt for one's fellow-beings. However, he does not subscribe to forcible appropriation of individual property and proposes a system of Trusteeship. He supports a greater role of the state in economic affairs, which contradicts his otherwise, minimalist views on the state. He defends limitations on the right of inheritance, state ownership of land and heavy industries, nationalisation without compensation and heavy taxes. The concepts of *Swaraj*, nationalism, socialism, industrialisation, individualism and the state are crucial elements, which would actualise this ideal. Among all these, *Swaraj* is of special significance.

Swaraj, a word taken from the Vedas in order to replace the ambiguous word 'independence' means self-rule and self-control, unlike independence, which means freedom without restraints. *Swaraj* was self-rule or self-control, and this meant three things: first, freedom was primarily an individual, not a collective quality. Second, it included the conventional civil liberties of the press, speech, association and religion; and third, it distinguished between inner and outer forms of freedom, inner freedom as anchoring and sustaining outer freedom (Dalton, 1982, pp.144-47).

Gandhi uses the term *swaraj* to mean positive freedom, to participate in the process of politics in every way possible rather than conceive the state as a negative institution that restricts activities to a bare minimum. It does not mean that the state is all-powerful but rather an intimate relationship that ought to exist between the state and its citizens. *Swaraj* implied participatory democracy.

By *Swaraj* I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of adult population, male and female, native born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the state and who have taken the trouble of having registered their names as voters....Real *swaraj* will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, *swaraj* is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority (Gandhi, 1947, p.14).

Gandhi's conception is similar to that of Green for both perceive actualisation of individual's entire potential within a societal framework. Like Green, Gandhi does not glorify the state. 'For both the aim was to make life morally meaningful for all people, and both viewed the community as held together not by compulsion but by the sense of a common interest of good' (Bondurant, 1967, p.162).

Gandhi clarifies on the need to bridge the gap between the white and blue-collar workers making manual labour mandatory for every single person. Elaborating on the theory of consent, he 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 abused'. For achieving this, people have to be educated so that they could regulate and control authority. Like Plato, Paine and J.S. Mill, he places enormous importance on education as a precondition to the enjoyment of democratic freedom and ability to fulfill obligations. He identifies what he calls the three pillars of *Swaraj*: (a) Hindu-Muslim unity, (b) abolition of untouchability and (c) upliftment of Indian villages. Criticising Tilak, he categorically emphasises that social evils are an impediment for *Swaraj* and therefore underlines the importance of social reforms.

2.3 ECONOMIC BASIS OF POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

For Gandhi, political independence without economic well-being is meaningless. He is conscious of the danger of continued oppression, even after independence, unless the lot of the common people is improved. For him, exploitation by a fellow Indian is as detestable as the exploitation by the British or any other foreign power. In the *Hind Swaraj* he explains this by comparing the Italian experience with that of India. Referring to Italian leaders like Victor Emanuel, Cavour and Garibaldi and Mazzini, he observes that for Cavour and Garibaldi, 'Italy meant the king of Italy and his henchmen' but for Mazzini, 'it meant the whole of the Italian people, that is, its agriculturists'. Since Mazzini's ideal has not been achieved, 'the Italy of Mazzini still remains in a state of slavery'. The gains of independence are absolutely nominal because 'the reforms for the sake of which the war was supposed to have been undertaken have not yet been granted. The condition of the people in general still remains the same'. Gandhi applies this understanding to the Indian situation and makes it absolutely clear that just formal independence of India means very little to him. National independence for him is a means to an end, and not an end in itself. Stating his position he writes:

I am sure you do not wish to reproduce such a condition in India. 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? You will admit that people under several Indian princes are being ground down. The latter mercilessly crush them. Their tyranny is greater than that of the English, and if you want such tyranny in India, then we shall never agree. My patriotism does not teach me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the heel of Indian princes just as much as that of the English. By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people, and if I could secure it at the hands of the English, I should bow down my head to them if any Englishman dedicated his life to securing the freedom of India, resisting tyranny and serving the land. I should welcome that Englishman as an Indian (Gandhi, 1938, pp.67-68).

The example of the Indian princes as responsible for the misery and poverty of the Indian masses is of crucial significance. It makes it clear that the welfare of the masses is intimately linked with political independence. Gandhi equates political with economic freedom. The basic necessities should be available to all, irrespective of one's status: "The *swaraj* of my dream is the poor man's *swaraj*" (Gandhi, 1947, p.17). Self-sufficient villages could best achieve the welfare of the people. This emphasis is because the overwhelming majority of the Indian people live in its seven hundred thousand villages, and no effective solution to the Indian problem could be found unless and until the villages are rejuvenated. Society, for Gandhi, is not to be organised as a pyramid but "as an oceanic circle with the individual at the center, ready to sacrifice for his village, the village for a larger circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals". The urban proletariat, which is the vanguard for Marx and Engels, has very little place in Gandhi's thinking, in spite of Gandhi's early association with the mill workers of Ahmedabad. In the village-based economy and society of India, where any far-reaching, genuine welfare is yet to begin, the urban proletariat (especially before independence) is an insignificant percentage of the have-nots. Moreover, in the Indian context, there is a considerable difference between the city and village life, with an absence of sanitation, education and medical facilities.

2.4 CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

Gandhi's prescription for social progress and transformation is contained in what he describes as the constructive programme. It is conceived as an alternative positive programme for social reorganisation to the one, the orthodox Anarchists offer. In its implementation, Gandhi met with partial success. It gives content to the concept of *satyagraha* and is framed with the purpose of their applicability within the Indian social and economic milieu. The programme is considered as the key to the attainment of *poorna swaraj* and consists of the following items: (1) communal harmony, (2) removal of untouchability, (3) prohibition, (4) *Khadi*, (5) cottage industries, (6) village sanitation, (7) new or basic education—*nai talim*, (8) adult education, (9) upliftment of women, (10) education in health and hygiene and (11) propagation of national language, *Hindustani*. Of these, the most important is *Khadi*.

For Gandhi, hand-spinning and hand-weaving is the salvation to the economic, political and psychological problems of India. He tries to meet the communist critique of the *Khaddar* programme by emphasising its capacity to organise the community. Decentralisation of industry is crucial for preserving the purity and cohesiveness of domestic life, artistic and creative talents of the individual members and more importantly, 'people's sense of freedom, ownership and dignity'. He wants to develop what he considers a *khadi* mentality by which he means decentralisation of production and distribution of the necessities of life thus ensuring economic and political freedom and reducing the dependence on the state and the government. He is also convinced that spinning would purify the body and soul of the spinners and would lead to spiritual progress.

Another highlight of the Constructive programme is the emphasis on the scheme of basic education by which he means the learning of the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) and acquisition of skill, preferably the traditional family skill. The aim is to make the individual self-supporting by the sale of products of work done by vocational training thus ensuring an assured occupation which would give the students, the material rewards which could, in turn, be diverted towards their further education and self-development. Gandhi also sees it as a practical expression of his belief in the idea of bread-labour, a concept which he borrows from Ruskin.

Gandhi is convinced that education has to be a lifelong process and should not stop with childhood. This is recommended with the view to enrich the minds of the individual, and here Gandhi, like Plato, believes in the human capacity to absorb knowledge lifelong. Moreover, education would have to be imparted in one's mother tongue as that enables the person to retain and understand what is taught. It would also instill love for one's mother tongue and pave the way for the development of a common national language, which for Gandhi would be *Hindustani*. He desires free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of fourteen.

Gandhi also drew attention to the filth and lack of hygienic conditions in the Indian villages by his emphasis on sanitation, clean drainages, well-paved roads and education in basic hygiene. He also drew special attention to the exploited and the underprivileged sections of the Indian society, namely the *Harijans* and women. He pleaded for the abolition of child marriage, *purdah* and other customs that kept women in a state of subjugation. Under his stewardship of the freedom movement, women participated in large numbers. Initially, in the 1920s, he wanted women to be confined to their homes and practice *swadeshi* by working

on the spinning-wheel but subsequently during the civil disobedience campaigns of the 1930s, he allowed them to picket liquor shops besides participating in the salt *satyagraha*. Women played an important role in many of the humanitarian works that Gandhi undertook like helping the poor, nursing the sick and promoting *khadi*. He advocated class, caste and gender equality seeing equality and justice as the bedrock of a humane and dignified society.

Through his constructive programme, to which he devoted most of his time and energy, Gandhi tried to link freedom with harmony. *Khaddar* and the spinning-wheel would bridge the gulf between the small numbers of educated urban elite with the majority of villagers. Similarly *Hindustani* would be the lingua franca of the nation as it would create one language for the entire nation. For Gandhi, both untouchability and communalism were corrosive poisons. He considered Hindu-Muslim unity as an extension of untouchability, which needed to be fought, as long as it lasted. Within this framework of social harmony Gandhi persisted with attempts to resolve particular social problems. He wanted to reconcile freedom with harmony and deal with the contradictions of caste and religion. Emphasising on compromise and cooperation, he endeavoured to reconcile divergent interests.

2.5 CITIZENSHIP

According to Gandhi all states have the intrinsic potential for oppression and violence, none more so than the modern highly bureaucratic state. His ideal is a state that is bereft of centralised power. His conception of citizenship was based on three cardinal tenets: *satya* (truth and sincerity), *ahimsa* (non-violence in thought and deed) and *dharma* (moral law and duty). According to Gandhi, all states tend to violate *satya* and *ahimsa*, which is why he described the state as a soulless machine. He distrusted state as it represented coercive power and hence reposed greater faith in the role of the individual to meet the onslaught of the state. The state represented compulsion, uniformity and violence in a concentrated form which is why his ideal was a non-violent state that would be self-governing and self-sufficient in which the majority rule would prevail with due respect for minority rights.

For Gandhi, the individual citizen is endowed with *dharma* and is the bearer of moral authority with the right and even the duty to judge the state and its laws, by the standards of *dharma*, which in turn, combined the essentials of *satya* and *ahimsa*. Since the state is a 'soulless machine' and the individual is endowed with *dharma* that encompasses both *satya* and *ahimsa*, it is therefore the paramount duty of the individual, endowed with moral authority, to challenge and even disobey the state for "every citizen renders himself responsible for every act of his government. And loyalty to a capricious and corrupt state is a sin, disloyalty a virtue. Civil disobedience becomes a sacred duty when the state becomes lawless or, which is the same thing, corrupt and a citizen who barter with such a state shares its corruption and lawlessness" (Gandhi, 1951, p.150). Describing civil disobedience as a moral right of every individual, he called it a "birthright that cannot be surrendered without losing self respect" (Ibid, p.155). The existence of injustice justifies political resistance and political protest is basically moral. Like Locke and Jefferson, he believed that loyalty to a constitution and its laws need to be reviewed and affirmed once in every generation. He also emphasised on the need for civil disobedients to be respectful of the law as they are law abiding citizens. A *satyagrahi* cooperates not out of fear of punishment but because cooperation is necessary for common good. Civil disobedience is based on profound respect for law and is resorted to publicly and nonviolently. Gandhi differed from Thoreau in stressing on strict non-violence and it is his conception "that has usually been accepted in recent discussions in civil disobedience". In more recent times, Rawls defined civil

disobedience as a “public non violent conscientious yet political act contrary to law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government” (Rawls, 1971, p.368).

In 1922, in a written statement submitted to a court of law, Gandhi explained his transformation from being a loyalist of the British Empire to that of a non-cooperator. Listing the deeds and misdeeds of the government, he concluded that the British rule had made Indians helpless, both economically and politically, and that the only solution was non-cooperation. Writing in *Young India* in 1920 he observed:

Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good. But in the past, non-cooperation only has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent non-cooperation only multiplies evil and that evil can only be sustained by violence. Withdrawal or support of evil requires complete abstention from violence.

Until 1914, Gandhi was a believer in the Empire and even wanted Indians to take up arms to defend the Empire. He considered it his duty to enlist Indians in the army on the grounds that there could be no friendship between the brave and the effeminate people; that Indians were cowardly and that if Indians wanted to become free from reproach then we ought to learn the use of arms. Only later on that Gandhi became convinced of the efficacy of non-violence as is clear from his deposition before the Disorder Inquiry Committee which Lord Hunter presided over. Replying to queries from Lord Hunter, Gandhi delineated his method of non-violent *satyagraha*:

Lord Hunter: “If you were a Governor yourself, what would you say to a movement that was started with the object of breaking those laws which your committee determined?

Gandhi: That would not be stating the whole case of *satyagraha* doctrine. If I were in charge of government and brought face to face with a body who, entirely in search of truth, were determined to seek redress from unjust laws without inflicting violence I would welcome it and consider that they were the best constitutionalists, and as Governor, I would take them by my side as advisers who would keep me on the right path.

Lord Hunter: People differ as to the justice or injustice of the particular laws.

Gandhi: That is the main reason why violence is eliminated and a *satyagrahi*... will fight by inflicting injuries on his person” (cited in Sankar Ghose 1984, p.154).

After Lord Hunter, Gandhi was questioned by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad.

Sir Chimanlal: You said you do not consider yourself a perfect *satyagrahi* yet. The large masses of people are then even less?

Gandhi: No, I do not consider myself as an extraordinary man.... Forty thousand Indians in South Africa, totally uncultured came to the conclusion that they could be *satyagrahis*, and if I could take you through those thrilling scenes in the Transvaal you will be surprised to hear (about) the restraint your countrymen in South Africa exhibited” (Ibid).

Clarifying his position further, Gandhi in August 1920 points out that “If India takes up the doctrine of the sword, she may gain momentary victory. Then India will cease to be the pride of my heart.... My life is dedicated to the service of India through the religion of non violence which I believe to be the root of Hinduism” (Ibid, p.155). Throughout the rest of

his life, he remains steadfast in his belief in non-violent mass action. The doctrine of non-violence and *satyagraha* are linked to Gandhi's innate attachment to truth which he describes as truth force. He is conscious of the fact that what truth is or what appears to be the truth at a particular given moment to someone may not be accepted as truth by others. He knows very well that to insist on an absolute truth is both impractical and premature at the present level of human development. "Gandhi never claimed", remarked Bondurant, "to know truth in any absolute sense and he repeatedly reminded others that man's inability to know the truth required that he maintain an increasingly open approach to those who differ from him" (Bondurant, 1967, p.19). This is the prime reason for linking *satyagraha* with non-violence. Accepting that truth is relative, he remarks "Truth is God". "There are innumerable definitions of God, because His manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me. But I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found Him But I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest. As long as I have not realized this absolute truth, so long, I must hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must meanwhile be my beacon, my shield and buckler" (cited in Bondurant, Ibid, p.19).

In Gandhi's ethics, self-suffering occupies an important place, which is different from cowardice, and is to be exercised with caution. The basic difference between self-suffering and violence lies in the fact that whereas violence allows injury to another person, self-suffering is free from any such possibility. This leads Gandhi to distinguish between non-violent mass action and passive resistance. It is not the violence of the weak as he consistently espouses the need for non-violence seeing it as the quality of the brave. Other than self-suffering, there is a need to overcome fear. "Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of dying in the training for non violence.... The votary of non violence has to cultivate the capacity for sacrifice of the highest type in order to be free from fear....He who has not overcome all fear cannot practice *ahimsa* to perfection" (cited in Bondurant, Ibid, p.26).

Gandhi is equally concerned about ensuring equality among all the segments of society and in doing so "he set the tone of Indian social ethical rethinking about the untouchables" (Heater, 1990, p.132). He condemned the practice whereby the untouchables were shunned by the rest and treated as outcastes. He gave them a new name to grant them human dignity by calling them *Harijans*. Opposing the 1934 Poona Pact, as it recommended separate electorates for the untouchables, Gandhi undertook fast unto death. If the pact was reached then he feared and rightly so the dismemberment of an already divided Hindu society.

Gandhi's entire purpose is to integrate the depressed classes with the nationalist mainstream economically, socially and culturally with no stigma attached to any Indian because of one's caste, creed, economic status or religion. In this integrative and equalitarian impulse, Gandhi is uncompromising in his criticism of the higher orthodox Hindus for perpetrating the inhuman caste system while asking the depressed classes also to rise to the occasion and banish bad habits which are obstacles to a larger social acceptance.

Gandhi also spoke of 'world citizenship', of 'the essential unity of God and man for that matter of all lives' holding that 'All mankind in essence are alike'. His *Advaita* doctrine, which he embraces, has certain affinities with Stoicism. Gandhi's conviction of the need for peace and justice through non-violent thought and action with a world federalist system that would pave way for world government is put into practice by Nehru with his doctrine of

non-alignment. Nehru points out that for enduring peace there is a need for the recognition of the moral law in both national and international relations, and an intrinsic relationship between right means and end.

2.6 CONCLUSION

For Gandhi, 'the fight for *Swaraj* means not mere political awakening but an all around awakening- social, educational, moral, economic and political'. He recommended the need to transform the Congress organisation into a *Lok Sevak Sangh*, a people's service organisation after India's independence. His insistence on the need to develop a system of *panchayats* and his stay in Noakhali, Bihar and his last fast for Hindu-Muslim unity in Delhi indicated his grasp of the complexities of the country and his desire to find solutions. He recognised that such tasks were less exciting and not spectacular but they were important for without achieving the basic unity of trust, confidence, equality and fair play, the formal independence achieved would remain incomplete.

The Indian state, contrary to Gandhi's vision and prescriptions, is a centralised and overdeveloped state like other post colonial states in the Third world. As a result the state, in spite of its enormity of strength and resources, has not been able to provide a consensual order. Equality and an innovative spirit have also remained a far cry. Far from liberating, the state, as Gandhi rightly pointed out, has made people more subservient. It has widened the gulf between the elite and the masses, the wide gap that exists between 'India' and 'Bharat' with the former unable to understand the needs, aspirations and language of the latter. It is important to rectify this situation and reduce this overdeveloped state by harmonising it with societal forces and aspirations.

Gandhi provides a framework for a participatory, functional and a development state with maximum inclusion and minimum exclusion. He does not defend the all powerful leviathan and like Thoreau, desired a government that governs the least; not in the sense of having a night watchman state but a fully functional one with rough parity and active citizenry. It is not a politics of withdrawal nor does he lament like Rousseau that people are free once in five years but one in the individuals relate to the larger social unit in the form of oceanic circles without losing one's identity and without overlooking the welfare of all.

2.7 SUMMARY

The state for Gandhi represents violence in its concentrated form but is necessary since human beings are social by nature. He desires a state that would employ little violence and coercion and wanted individual actions to be regulated by voluntary efforts as far as possible. He advocates limited state sovereignty for there is an obligation higher than mere politics. His position is strengthened by his faith in individual personality. The ideal society would be a decentralised one giving ample scope for self-development. Gandhi uses the term *swaraj* to mean positive freedom, to participate in the process of politics in every way possible rather than conceive the state as a negative institution that restricts activities to a bare minimum. *Swaraj* implied participatory democracy. For Gandhi, political independence without economic well-being is meaningless. Gandhi's prescription for social progress and transformation is contained in what he describes as the constructive programme. The state is a 'soulless machine' and the individual is endowed with *dharma* that encompasses both *satya* and *ahimsa*. It is therefore the paramount duty of the individual, endowed with moral authority, to challenge and even disobey the state. Gandhi also spoke of 'world citizenship',

of 'the essential unity of God and man for that matter of all lives' holding that 'All mankind in essence are alike'.

2.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Explain Gandhi's views on the state and *swaraj*.
2. What is the relationship between economic and political independence in Gandhi's thought?
3. Describe the role of constructive programme in Gandhi's philosophy.
4. Critically assess Gandhi's views on citizenship.

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UNIT 3 **GANDHI'S VIEWS ON DEMOCRACY (GRAM SWARAJ)**

Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 3.2 City and Village
- 3.3 Gram Swaraj
- 3.4 Critique of Industrialisation
- 3.5 Critique of Machinery
- 3.6 Conclusion
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Terminal Questions
 - Suggested Readings

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the modern Indian political discourse, the sharp contrast between the urbanised west and the poverty stricken villages of India had been a constant reminder that both western imperialism and its exploitative nature has kept multitudes of Indian people living in the Indian villages in total servitude and destitution. The Indian situation is comparable to the miserable conditions of the peasantry under the Czarist regime and with Gandhi's intimate knowledge of Tolstoy's concerns and writings he was well acquainted with the pathetic conditions of the peasantry of Czarist Russia. In the early twentieth century, in the background of the rise of Japan and its psychological impact on a section of the Indian intelligentsia and its nationalist leaders, Gandhi, in the *Hind Swaraj* (1909) categorically rules out the applicability of that model in the Indian condition.

Famine was a regular feature during the British colonial rule and in this situation the utmost necessity of rural reconstruction became an important component of the nationalist discourse in the wake of the *swadeshi* movement in Bengal at the time of the Partition of Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore wrote an important essay entitled *Swadeshi Samaj* (1904) in which there was an appeal for self-help in reconstructing the villages and solve the acute water shortage from which it suffers perennially. At this time there were lot of projections of parallel nationalist self-supportive, educational, industrial and cooperative enterprises to alleviate the miseries of the rural poor. However, none of these attempts had a comprehensive plan of an alternative development strategy for rural reconstruction and to reduce the gulf between the cities and the villages. Gandhi provided a philosophy of a village centred life which he described as the *gram swaraj*.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to understand:

- Gandhi's concept of Gram Swaraj
- Gandhi's critique of industrialisation
- Gandhi's criticism of Machinery

3.2 CITY AND VILLAGE

Within the larger framework of Gandhi's concern for majority alleviation he put the idea of the *gram swaraj* at the very centre of his social, political and economic philosophy. Since the overwhelming majority of Indians live in villages, Gandhi's primary concern is to concentrate on this important segment and provide a blueprint by which the face of rural India would drastically change for the better. The cities, remarks Gandhi, do not represent India. They are alien to it. He considers the cities as artificial, facilitating the exploitation by the imperialist powers; of sharing the plunder of the villages with the imperialist powers. "I regard the growth of cities as an evil thing. Unfortunate for mankind and the world, unfortunate for England and unfortunate for India. The British have exploited India through its cities. The latter have exploited the villages. The blood of the villages is the cement with which the edifice of the cities is built" (cited in Ganguli, 1973, pp.184-85)

Writing in 1921, he points out that the cities are "brokers and commission agents for the big houses of Europe, America and Japan. The cities have cooperated with the latter in the bleeding process that has gone on for 200 years" (cited in Ganguli, Ibid, p.184). He further laments that

Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realise that the government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses.... I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and town-dwellers in India will have to answer, if there is a God above for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history (cited in Ganguli, ibid, pp.184-85).

Gandhi provides an alternative of total rural reconstruction and rebuilding in the process of which the entire Indian situation would change. He identifies the survival of the Indian nation with that of the meaningful survival of the villages reviving the traditional ways and means of the rural life which have degenerated because of the superstitious beliefs and neglect of this aspect by western imperialism. He is conscious of the enormous gap that exists between the villages and the cities in education, culture, medicine, recreation and employment opportunities. The gulf increases and Gandhi wants to stop this process and allow the village to grow and prosper. Even though he is very critical of the cities, he never wants to eliminate them. He wants to reform them and place them in a natural setting. Furthermore, though Gandhi does not provide for concrete picture of the city's structure, he makes three general suggestions: (1) "the blood that is inflating the arteries of the cities run once again the blood vessels of the villages". (2) The cities did not need to send its people back to the village, rather "they should re-adjust their lives so as to cease to sponge upon the poor village folk and make to the latter what reparation is possible, even at this late hour, by helping to resuscitate their ruined economy" and (iii) "in my picture of the rural economy the cities would take their natural place and do not appear as unnatural, congested sports or boils on the body politics, as they are today" (cited in Ganguli, Ibid, pp.184-75).

Understanding the importance of the dynamics of power, Gandhi begins his argument pleading for the empowerment of the small village communities which would derive sustenance with cottage industries that would provide the economic bases of the rural society. Emphasising the darker side of industrialisation which devastates the rural life and uproots thousands of people from their natural habitat, the cottage industries would provide the economic basis

of a small community which is in a position to manage and to enhance the quality of life and happiness as Gandhi is convinced that the fulfilment and happiness of people is manifested when they live in small communities rather than in larger urbanised rootless communities.

Gandhi wants the development of a new partnership between the villages and the cities, a vision that Marx and Engels too had. He does not want prosperity in the cities at the expense of the village, where the majority of the Indian population live. The villages are as important as the cities, if not more. His views on industrialisation and modern technology might help us to understand his extraordinary emphasis on the need for regenerating village life.

3.3 GRAM SWARAJ

Gandhi is a virulent critic of all models of western industrialisation as though they produce material goods but are alien to our moral values. The village panchayat system and the village republic could create both a participatory model of democracy and would also allow an escape route to avoid the perils of western industrialisation. *Gram Swaraj* will be the essential framework of this alternative model with the promotion of self-sufficiency in providing the material conditions essential for fulfilling the needs of the individual and enhance the elements of self-respect and pride in oneself. Gandhi is conscious that the present day conditions of the villages are far from the ideal that he desires and it is because of this consciousness that he argues for a reformed rural setting where truth and non-violence would co-exist in a situation of harmony and promotion and practice of rural virtues of cooperation and performance of duties. His close associate, J. C. Kumarappa coins the term 'villagism', which Gandhi gladly accepts as an essential framework of realising rural *swaraj*. Gandhi desires a complete economic revival of India with *satya* and *ahimsa* as its foundation and the credit for preparing a blueprint along these lines goes to Kumarappa.

The framework for the village *swaraj* is provided in two books of Kumarappa: *Why the village movement: A plea for village centred economic order* and *Capitalism, socialism and villagism*. The first book is considered as the first normative statement of Gandhian economics and could be regarded as the manifesto of Gandhi's economic vision. Kumarappa is of the view that as economic autonomy for the individual is essential for freedom and that as majority of Indians live in rural areas, the village economy has to be the basis of India's social well-being. In the rapid process of industrialisation and urbanisation it is the countryside that suffers the most. He observes that "there can be no industrialisation without predation" and that agriculture was and is the greatest among all the occupations. Writing about the impact of industry and agriculture on the natural world, Kumarappa states:

In case of agricultural civilisation, the system ordained by nature is not interfered with to any great extent. If there is a variation at all, it follows a natural mutation. The agriculturalist only aids nature or intensifies in a short time what takes places in nature in a long period.... Under the economic system of the industrial society... we find variations from nature are very violent in that a large supply of goods is produced irrespective of demand, and then the demand is artificially created for goods by means of clever advertisements.

Kumarappa is against use of chemical fertilizers and desires the use of organic manure as a way of 'Economy of Permanence' as against the man-made 'Economy of Transience'. He strongly favours the use of night soil as manure thereby converting human waste into wealth and in overcoming the prejudices of caste. He criticises the British for their poor maintenance

of irrigation tanks and urges the conservation of ground water. He also favours small industry as a means of resource preservation. He argues that we should make Mother Nature our great teacher and never do anything that is contrary to her ways, for if we do that we will be annihilated sooner or later. "Water from the sea rises as vapour and falls on land in refreshing showers and returns back to the sea again ... A nation that forgets or ignores this *fundamental process* in forming its institutions will disintegrate". Kumarappa recognises the decay and regeneration in the 'cycle of life' as a fundamental process in which all creatures cooperate. Violence results if "this cycle is broken at any stage, at any time, consciously or unconsciously". He supports an economy that is close to the natural order as that is deeply moral with well defined rights and ethical obligations on every participant and contributes to the welfare of all. Crucial to Kumarappa's conception of an ideal society is the understanding that the economic freedom holds the key to individual's autonomy and that economic freedom forms the basis for political and social freedom. A non-violent social organisation is predicated on providing complete autonomy for every individual. The key to individual autonomy lies in the nature and purpose of work; if work unleashes the creative energies in the human being it would lead to happiness. He also realised centralisation as the primary road block to individual autonomy and freedom.

Gandhi clarifies that *swaraj* is self-rule and self-restraint grounded in the moral autonomy of the individual. He sees an intimate link between *swaraj* and *swadeshi* or self-reliance. "Swaraj for me means freedom for the meanest of my countrymen. I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange 'king log' for 'king stork'... there is no freedom for India so long as one man, no matter how highly placed he may be, holds in the hollow of his hands the life, property and honour of millions of human beings. It is an artificial, unnatural and uncivilized institution. The end of it is an essential preliminary of *Swaraj*".

3.4 CRITIQUE OF INDUSTRIALISATION

In the *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi severely criticises modern technology and the ill-effects of modern industrialisation so much that he does not compromise with any of its forms. The basic cause of human misery and the 'sin' of modern civilisation is the advent of technology and industrialisation. This view apparently takes shape during his formative years with his direct contact with the English process of modern industrialisation and his experiences in South Africa. Charles Dickens, Karl Marx, Thomas Hill Green and the Fabian socialists describe the horrors of the English capitalist industrial society. Towards the end of the 19th century, while Gandhi was still in England, factory legislations and enlargement of franchise ameliorated many of the evils of industrialisation. But they only diminished and did not eliminate the major effects of industrialisation. Gandhi could easily grasp the dark side of industrialisation.

In the early 20th century, many thinkers started to emphasise that modern industrial civilisation was not an unmixed blessing. The expressionist movement in philosophy and art were clamouring against the miseries of the emerging industrial giants. Philosophers like Bertrand Russell shared this anxiety. Eliot expressed it best in the following lines:

We are the hollowmen,

We are the hollowmen;

Leaning together,

Headpiece filled with straw, Alas!

This revolt against the industrial revolution is represented in India by Tagore's conception of freedom and Gandhi's denunciation of the West. Gandhi does not deny the immense rise in productivity and the consequent rise in the standard of living in the West. He does, however, deny the claim that industrialisation, in its current form, advanced human civilisation by promoting happiness and well-being among common people. He concedes that, because of industrialisation, in certain spheres like housing, the people have begun to live better as compared to earlier times. These advances are hailed as an advancement of civilisation, promoting 'bodily happiness'. Earlier, people wore skins and used spears as weapons. But, now, they wore a wide range of clothing and used firearms. If people in other parts of the world accepted the modern European practices, "they should have achieved civilisation. Furthermore, technology had enormously enhanced man's productive power and his capacity to accumulate wealth. These are also signs of civilisation; but, there was also another side to the picture now, self destruction" (Gandhi, 1938, pp.35-37).

Gandhi's indignation at the consequences of industrialisation is apparent. With a remarkable affinity to Marx's criticism of Adam Smith, Gandhi rejects the claims of the advancement as the present economic order is based on inequality. Gandhi, like Marx, also points out to the relative fall under the present industrial system. In spite of improved productive capacity, inequality persists and the workers live on subsistence wages. The prescription for eradicating inequality is the abolition of industrial civilisation. He found human salvation in a return to nature. The hidden meaning of the *Hind Swaraj* is the need for the freedom of the working class and the common people. This becomes evident from the Italian example. Gandhi clearly states that Mazzini's Italy is still in slavery, for it does not cater to the needs and aspirations of the ordinary people. Political independence by itself is irrelevant unless there is improvement and elevation in the lives of the ordinary people the poor, the underprivileged and the toiling masses. Dalton states that:

The substance of the view of civilisation advanced in *Hind Swaraj* remained intact throughout Gandhi's life and deeply affected his conception of the nature of the good society. At its worst, this view manifests itself in a negative suspicion of the West and a highly provincial world outlook. At its best, it moulded a theory of the good society suited to the Indian situation; a theory of social order of small communities, each seeking attainment of individual freedom and social equality through mutual cooperation and respect. This was his vision of *Sarvodaya*, the 'Welfare of All': the pattern of an Indian society that had indeed achieved *Swaraj*.

Gandhi's economic point of view, as Gyan Chand points out, like his political and social viewpoints, "was and is an integral part of Gandhi's whole philosophy of life; and it can be fully understood and duly appreciated only if this basic fact is borne in mind". This perspective broadens the whole concept of economic life and includes:

- (1) The primary importance of man in production, distribution and exchange. In other words, the primary purpose of the economy is the well-being, growth and development of man.
- (2) Specially, this principle applies to the use of machinery in the production process. "Machinery for man and not man for machinery has to be the cardinal principle of mechanised production".
- (3) From the preceding point of view, industrialisation involving mass production, centralisation of initiative, power, authority and policy formulation is undesirable and is to be reduced to the barest minimum.

- (4) A logical consequence of this is that decentralisation of production is to be carried to the maximum possible extent.
- (5) "Small communities of producers means economic and social democracy, reduction of inequalities within a very limited range and decentralized initiative".
- (6) These changes have far reaching implications and can only be brought about with radical changes in society.

The radical changes need a social transformation that would be non-violent through mass awakening, widely diffused social awareness and the use of the people's power for fundamental social transformation. This awakening and awareness would be based on a vision of a society based on justice, equality and freedom. The goal of economic equality is what unites Gandhi with the socialists but where they depart is with regard to the means of reaching that goal. For the socialists, the basis of economic equality is the abolition of private property and the social ownership of the means of production. Gandhi desires economic equality but without wanting to abolish private property. He expects the rich to act as trustees of the entire society. Since they would act neither for private gain nor for profit, there would be differences in the amount of wealth, but there would be no differences in services and lifestyles. Private ownership would continue for Gandhi, except in large-scale industries, it would be imbued with public purpose. The development of social spirit and socialist consciousness are the two cardinal principles of Gandhi's concept of trusteeship. The deeper meaning of his concept of trusteeship is akin to the Weberian notion of puritan ethics, which does not decry the increase in production but prohibited conscious consumption. It has a Calvinistic overtone and is beneficial to societies like ours where wide disparities are an eyesore and exist without any effective social sanction and control.

Gandhi acknowledges the existence of social conflict and different conflicting class interests but he believes that such conflicts would be resolved by non-violent mass action. He alludes to the existence of conflict in three sectors: (1) conflict of labour and capital in industry; (2) conflict of tenant and landlord in agriculture and (3) conflict of village and city. He is confident that these conflicts could be resolved through trusteeship and passive resistance with help of non-violence without class war. Gandhi rejects the idea of revolutionary seizure of state power and stresses on the transformation of relationship through peaceful transfer of power. While Marx rejects capitalism but not industrialisation, Gandhi wants to restrict industrialisation.

3.5 CRITIQUE OF MACHINERY

Gandhi is keen to limit and not eradicate machinery. His views on machinery and modern industry are derived from the influence that John Ruskin (1819-1900)¹ had on him. He supports mechanisation, which would help the individual and not encroach upon individuality. He clarifies about the misconceptions to his opposition to machines.

"How can I be when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning wheel is a machine; a little toothpick is a machine. What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for fraction of mankind but for all. I want concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today, machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus

behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might....The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to atrophy the limits of man. The machine should not tend to atrophy the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the singer's sewing machinery. It is one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance about the device itself".

Gandhi supports those machines that are necessary to satisfy the basic human needs. He also feels that industries should be socially owned by which he means welfare of society. He wants limited industrialisation to satisfy limited wants such as food production, shelter, health care and basic education. He also points out the impersonal and monotonous life that industrialisation entails. But he is ready to accept it if it helps satisfy the basic human requirements and if it is socially controlled. He is aware of the enormous differences among countries and points out that the choice of technique depends on circumstances. Countries like India with abundant labour and large-scale unemployment and underemployment should restrict the use of machinery.

Gandhi's antagonism to the use of machinery and industrialisation set him apart not only from earlier Indian thinkers like Ranade and Gokhale but also among some of his contemporaries like Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi rejects mechanised industrialisation on moral and economic grounds. He considers machines as sins of modern civilisation. He dislikes the migration of people from villages to cities in search of jobs, low wages and poor working conditions of workers and unemployment. He laments about the under-utilisation of available labour in view of the seasonal nature of agriculture which depends heavily on monsoons. He points out that machines displace human or animal labour, instead of merely supplementing it or increasing its efficiency. Unlike human labour there are no physical limits to the growth and expansion of machines. Gandhi's case against machines is "because they deprive men of their employment and render them jobless. I oppose them not because they are machines but because they create unemployment.... If one machine does the work of a hundred men, then where are we to employ those hundred men"?

Gandhi points out that the aggregate demand for labour is given and that as a result of specialisation in the production process, workers have highly specific skills and cannot be employed elsewhere in the economy even if there arises an opportunity for employment. In general, he rejects machines because it displaces human labour and is disturbed by the fact that with the proliferation of highly mechanised capital intensive industries in a country like India with high population, it would lead to large scale unemployment with damaging social effects. Large scale mechanisation also leads to concentration of production and distribution in few hands and that would result in concentration of economic power.

Gandhi stressed on self-reliance through labour for all citizens of future India and he is categorical that winning and maintenance of freedom is impossible without such work discipline. It is for this reason that the spinning-wheel takes pride of place in this campaign, as he believes that it provides the best means through which the poor could earn a supplementary income or save money by producing their own cloth. Spinning-wheel, for Gandhi, epitomises the spirit of self-reliance.

According to Gandhi, the cause of poverty is the covetousness of the rich and the exploitation of the needy by the greedy. Incomes would have to be redistributed for raising the output and fulfilment of the basic needs of the masses; this would depend a lot on limiting the wants of the rich. If the masses are prepared to reject the evils of capital

accumulation, “they would strive to attain a more just distribution of the products of labour. Under the new outlook multiplicity of material wants will not be the aim of the life, the aim will be rather their restriction consistently with comfort. We shall cease to think of getting what we can, but we shall decline to receive what all cannot get”. To get rid of poverty there is a need for a revolutionary change in prevailing attitudes to consumption and to wealth in affluent societies as well as in the poorer countries which are caught up in the ‘revolution of rising expectations’.

Gandhi's *Swaraj* is far removed from the Marxist ideal of a socialist stateless, classless utopia. Like the Marxists and the socialists, he desires an egalitarian society but opposes their deterministic view of history and human nature, and their espousal of violent revolutionary changes. Like Marx, he accepts social conflict but does not think that violence is adequate to resolve it. He admits that violence has helped in bringing about political liberty in certain cases but it “has always brought the form and not the substance of freedom” for “the results of violent revolution are always liable to be lost by violent counter revolution”. For Gandhi, commitment to non-violence is total but it is the non-violence of the brave. A non-violent revolutionary does not advocate a revolutionary seizure of state power but a transformation of relationships culminating in a peaceful transfer of power.

Gandhi, like Marx, accepts that contemporary situation is full of conflict but differs from Marx in focusing on the conflict between the city and the village. Marx's philosophy is essentially urban-oriented as he dismisses village culture as an ‘idiocy’. Gandhi contends that India lives in its villages and that city culture is not only exploitative but also unequal. Gandhi, unlike Marx, rejects the notion of class struggle, class polarisation and antagonisms. He admits his attraction to the Marxist ideal but expressed doubts about the means to achieve it. He also, unlike Marx, rejects large-scale industrialisation and common ownership of property. Gandhi accepts, like Aristotle, that property is necessary and acknowledges the talent in those individuals who have the ability to create wealth but insists that this wealth be used for common good. Gandhi proposes the Trusteeship system to ensure harmony between the property owners and the non-propertied. Like Marx, he is conscious of the notion of relative fall. Under the present industrial system, despite enormous and improved productive capacity, inequality not only persists but has also increased. In this sense, he accepts Marx's criticism of Adam Smith for ignoring social nature of our needs. However, while Marx only rejects industrial capitalism, Gandhi rejects Western civilisation along with its attendant features like mechanisation and industrialisation as it is based on extreme inequality and it dehumanises the human being. Like the Marxists and the socialists, Gandhi desires an egalitarian, just and non-exploitative society.

If we differentiate between the transient and the permanent, the local and the perennial, the essential Gandhi emerges in a different perspective bringing out the similarities between Gandhi and Marx. There is an agreement on basic issues though their methods of reaching the ideal differ. Both accept the imperfection of the modern society since it is based on conflict and inequality. Both dislike mechanical interpretation and emphasise the dynamic role of the human being in bringing about the necessary transformation in society. Both are confident of human capacity to transcend the present stage of irrational existence and reach a higher stage based on harmony and fulfilment of individual needs.

The only Western parallel to Gandhi is Rousseau, for like Rousseau, he too idealises a glorious past but realises that since there is no going back, salvation lies in small, independent, self-governing and self-sufficient communities. Gandhi's ideal is an “anarchist society where each individual is a law to himself, living peacefully and with goodwill towards all, controlling

all his passions and living by his own labour". The Indian Marxists underrated Gandhi's social criticisms and his resolve to bring about a better and equitable social order.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Gandhi is a severe critic of contemporary society and is conscious of its divisions, structural fallacies and many inadequacies. He emphasises the human factor in any kind of revolutionary transformation as he desires the elimination of misery and conflict. He provides a framework for resolving conflicts and for building a social, political and economic order based on consensus. Both his commitment to non-violence and his own initiatives in resolving conflicts between the different segments were with the aim of establishing a non-exploitative, equal and just order. He sought to transform by relying on moral persuasion and pressure on the propertied and the advantaged. The idea of moral coercion lay at the heart of non-violent *satyagraha*. Rabindranath Tagore, like Gandhi, is conscious of the acute differences and conflicts in the Indian society but believes that it is society and not politics that has to be the primary focus.

The distinctiveness of Gandhi's outlook is that he points to the gap that exists between the village and the city and that the gulf would increase in the coming future. His desire is to narrow the gap and create a framework for the village to grow and prosper without destroying the city. He desires their reform so that a new partnership could evolve between the village and the city. He also points out to the differences among countries. Countries like India with abundant labour and, unemployment and underemployment ought to restrict the use of machinery. On both these scores, the Gandhi's blueprint is of immense importance to us. The prosperity of the village is the key to create a new balanced India, for checking the uncontrollable migration to cities that are bursting in its seams and not in a position to offer the means for decent and dignified life and also ensuring a balance between agriculture and industry.

3.7 SUMMARY

Gandhi's concern for majority alleviation makes him place the idea of the *gram swaraj* at the very centre of his social, political and economic philosophy. Since the overwhelming majority of Indians live in villages, Gandhi's primary concern is to concentrate on this important segment and provide a blueprint by which the face of rural India would drastically change for the better. He considers the cities as artificial, facilitating the exploitation by the imperialist powers; of sharing the plunder of the villages with the imperialist powers. He identifies the survival of the Indian nation with that of the meaningful survival of the villages reviving the traditional ways and means of the rural life which have degenerated because of the superstitious beliefs and neglect of this aspect by western imperialism. Even though he is very critical of the cities, he never wants to eliminate them. He wants to reform them and place them in a natural setting.

3.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. How does Gandhi distinguish the village from the city?
2. Describe Gandhi's conception of '*Gram Swaraj*'.
3. Discuss Gandhi's criticism of industrialisation.
4. What are Gandhi's criticisms of machines?

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(Endnotes)

Ruskin violently attacked capitalism for it distorted affections and responsibility in social relationships. He did not think socialism would remedy.

UNIT 4 **GANDHI'S CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM**

Structure

4.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

4.2 India as a nation

4.3 Assessment of the Congress and the British Political Institutions and Practices

4.4 Self -Rule: need to bridge the gap between the elite and the masses

4.5 Conclusion

4.6 Summary

4.7 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The modern Indian political discourse, which begins with Rammohun Roy, had distinctively a social connotation which only transformed itself into a political one after the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885. The philosophy of early Indian nationalism focused more on the social rather than on the political because of the deep social cleavages and the unevenness in which the modern notion like a nation looked far fetched. For instance, Rammohun talks of continued Indian subordination and freedom from the British after 150 years. After Rammohun we find a larger assertion in the context of an assertion of an Indian identity, yet, like Surendranath Bannerjee, the general proposition was that India is not yet a nation but a nation in making.

At this time, during the last quarter of the 19th century, there was a crystallisation of the philosophy of cultural nationalism manifested mainly in Dayananda Saraswati and Swami Vivekananda. Dayananda talks of a glorious Indian past declaring the *Vedas* to be the epic source of knowledge for the whole of humankind but within this revivalist philosophy, he is also conscious of the degeneration and the need for reform and creation of a new Indian identity. In this formulation there is a reflection of a great deal of British impact when he characterises the British as being superior as they exude confidence in their dress, language and culture. Most importantly the British honour the idea of contract in their personal relations. In the context of contemporary India under colonial subjugation, he wants a cultural awakening and integration preaching equality as the core of the Indian tradition and propagating *swadeshi* and *Hindustani* as the lingua franca of the country. Dayananda's general argument is to prove the point that the Indians are in no way inferior to the British and within the framework of a revivalist past, it is quite possible to envisage a better future of India as a nation. Vivekananda, articulating another important dimension of a dialectical co-relationship, finds the western civilisation and the Indian civilisation being only partially complete because the West is deficient in spirituality whereas India lacks a tradition of modern education and scientific enquiry.

By the time Gandhi entered the political arena in India via his long and fruitful experiments in truth in South Africa, the debate between the Moderates and the Extremists was virtually

over and the debate over the primacy of the social or of the political was resolved. By this time, with the widespread influence of the reform movements and the nationalist struggle that had exerted on the Indian mind many of the European conceptions and articulations; these became an integral part of the nationalist discourse with the Mahatma becoming the representative and unifying force. He dismisses the idea that the attributes of a nation in India are of a recent origin and especially due to the imprint of British colonialism. Following the spirit of earlier cultural nationalism, he traces back to the ancient Indian heritage to demonstrate that the idea of the Indian nation not only in its rudimentary form but also in the context of certain fulfilment existed much before either the idea of nationalism or the nation-state originated in the West. That the great places of pilgrimage spread all over India and the saints who, by their acts of sacrifice and perseverance, ceased to be local or regional and became national was an enough indication that India was a nation much before the British rule.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- Gandhi's perception of India as a nation
- Gandhi's assessment of British political institutions and practices
- Gandhi's concept of self-rule and how it should bridge the gap between the elite and the masses

4.2 INDIA AS A NATION

Gandhi rejects the popular perception that 'India has become a nation under the British rule' and disputes the claim of those who argue that India is a nation after the British introduced western ideas and to the changes brought about by the modern means of communication such as the railways and the telegraph. This view, he dismisses, is the British interpretation of Indian history and points out in the *Hind Swaraj* (1909) "I hold this to be mistake. The English have taught us that we were not one nation before and that it will require centuries before we become one nation. This is without foundations. We were one nation before they came to India. One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was because we were one nation that we were able to establish one kingdom. Subsequently, they divided us" (p.46).

Gandhi's claim that India is nation is based on two assumptions: the first is that ancient Indian civilisation has a capacity to accommodate diversity and plurality and the second is that in the ancient India, the acharyas, in establishing certain places of pilgrimage, laid the basis for the evolution of an all India consciousness. The Ancient civilisation of India was predominantly Hindu in character but it was open to non-Hindu values and ideas. Gandhi highlights the accommodative capacity of India to fuse new ideas and values with its ancient civilisation over several centuries. As for the second assertion, Gandhi points out that pilgrim centres like Haridwar in the North and Rameshwaram in the South and Jagannath in the East were established not merely for religious benefit but "to create and sustain a sense of common identity among Indians scattered over an immense territory...they saw that India was one undivided land so made by nature. They, therefore, argued that it must be one nation. Arguing thus, they established holy places in various parts of India, and fired the people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world".

According to Gandhi, India's strength lies in the unity amidst its diversity. He acknowledges the existence of many languages and dialects and insists that all provincial languages of Sanskrit and Dravidian stock should be replaced by *Devanagari*. Until one script is formalised, Hindustani could be used as the *lingua franca* with the option of either Persian or Nagari characters and "when the hearts of two meet, the two forms of the same language will be fused together, and we shall have a resultant of the two, containing as many Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic or other words as may be necessary for its full growth and full expression".

Writing about India as the home to many religions, Gandhi says "India cannot cease to be one nation because people belonging to different religions live in it. The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation, they merge in it. A country is one nation only when such a condition obtains in it. The country must have a faculty for assimilation. India has ever been such a country. In reality, there are many religions as there are individuals; but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another's religion. If they do, they are not fit to be considered a nation. If the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in dream-land. The Hindus, the Mahomedans, the Parsis and the Christians, who have made India their country, are fellow countrymen, and they will have to live in unity, if only for their own interest. In no part of the world are one nationality and one religious synonymous terms, nor has it ever been so in India".

To the question posed by the Reader in the *Hind Swaraj* as to whether the "introduction of Mahomedanism not unmade the nation? Indian civilisation may have supplied a basis for a common identity in the pre-Islamic period; but now we have Mahomedans, Parsis and Christians. Our very proverbs prove it. The Muslims turn to the West for worship, and the Hindus to the East; the Muslims kill cows, the Hindus worship them. The Muslims do not believe in ahimsa, while the Hindus adhere to it. We thus meet with differences at every stop. How can India be one nation?" Gandhi is aware of the factual differences between the Hindus and Muslims but does not consider these differences serious enough to prevent the emergence of composite nationalism. He does not see the presence of Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs and Christians as a challenge to Indian civilisation but as an opportunity to allow for accommodation. Furthermore, he also underlines that religion as a sect ought not be the basis of nationality: India cannot cease to be one nation because people belonging to different religions live in it. The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy the nation".

On the question of language Gandhi rejects the Macaulay's concept of the role of English language in India; the primacy desired of the mother-tongue or what the *Hind Swaraj* calls provincial language and the desirability of using Hindustani as the *lingua franca* of India. In a letter to Lord Amphill, Gandhi declares: "I no longer believe as I used to in Lord Macaulay as a benefactor through his Minute on education". In the *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi writes "the foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us". Subsequently, he accuses the English-knowing Indians for having enslaved India and says "the curse of the nation will rest not upon the English but upon us". He rejects Macaulay's thesis that Sanskrit and Persian have no foundational value for the Indian civilisation in the future and that English should replace them and become the new foundation language of modern India. If the English language is given this cultural role it is tantamount to committing national suicide. Indians, who look upon English language as the foundation of the new Indian culture, are enslaving and not liberating India. He rejects Macaulay's perception of English as the foundation of Indian civilisation but acknowledges the practical role played by English in ensuring the needs of scientific education and inter-provincial communication.

Gandhi insists that the mother-tongue has to be the primary basis of the cultural life of each 'province' while he realises that English has to be used to bring about the further growth of the mother-tongue. In the *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi says unequivocally that "we have to improve all our languages. What subjects we should learn through them not be elaborated here. Those English books which are valuable we should translate into the various Indian languages". He also provides another insight that English should be the language of scientific education and the mother-tongue as the language of ethical education. Gandhi is stressing on how there exists a divide between the English speaking elite and the masses who speak their respective mother-tongues in India and how this divide results in social differentiation and a feeling of superiority among the elite and inferiority among the masses. It is this nefarious tendency of the new Indian elite that he is criticising and not the knowledge of the English language as such. He is aware of its benefits in the areas of communication and scientific progress and stresses on the need to place English within the framework of Indian nationalism. He insists on the need to improve all Indian languages.

Gandhi opts for Hindi with the option of writing it in Devanagari or Persian script as the *lingua franca* for India and emphasises that 'every cultured Indian will know in addition to his own provincial language; if a Hindu, Sanskrit; if a Mahomedan, Arabic; if a Parsee, Persian, all Hindi. Some Hindus should know Arabic and Persian; some Mahomedans and Parsees, Sanskrit. Several Northerners and Westerners should learn Tamil'.

Gandhi consistently advocated States based on language. In 1918, when a proposal for the linguistic re-distribution of India was defeated in the Imperial Legislature, Gandhi wrote to the person who proposed the move: "Your idea is excellent but there is no possibility of its being carried out in the present atmosphere". Three years later he told the Home Rule League that "to ensure speedy attention to people's needs and development of every component part of the nation", they should "strive to bring about a linguistic division of India". Congress committees were created based on mother-tongue and that gave a tremendous encouragement to the national movement. Gandhi is confident that Indian nationalism has a golden opportunity to teach something new to the world, namely the model of a functioning multi-lingual and multi-religious nation.

Gandhi repeatedly stressed, like Rammohun and Vivekananda, on religious pluralism and on the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. He earnestly pleads with his followers to 'remember that his own religion is the truest to every man even if it stands low in the scales of philosophical comparison'. His encounter with the missionaries in South Africa played a crucial part in the development of his ideas. Their willingness to discuss religious issues with Gandhi makes him realise the importance of religion and makes him see the positive and negative side to their teachings. On the positive side, he adopts the evangelical outlook that God guides people and shares their belief that organisations like the Church and other voluntary associations should become instruments for reforming society and alleviating human miseries. However, he could not reconcile to their narrow view that one particular religion alone could be true and considers this as their most serious limitation. He rejects religious conversion as an ethical failure to think that it is the duty of any religion to remove persons from another religion is a violation of the integrity of family and community relationships.

4.3 ASSESSMENT OF THE CONGRESS AND THE BRITISH POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND PRACTICES

In the *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi makes an assessment of the Indian National Congress from its inception till 1909. Chapters 1-3 and part of Chapter 20 is devoted to this subject. To the Reader's assertion that the young in India are indifferent to the Congress as they think of it as an instrument for perpetuating British rule and the need to abandon the constitutional mode of agitation, and to adopt violence, Gandhi points out that despite its inadequacies, the Congress was the first institution that has "enthused us with the idea of nationality". It has brought together Indians from different parts of India and has insisted that the "Nation should control revenue and expenditure" and "has always desired self government after the Canadian model" and has given us "a foretaste of Home Rule". It would be improper to be dismissive of the Congress as that would "retard the fulfilment" of the final object of attaining *true swaraj*.

Gandhi pays tribute to Dadabhai Naoroji as the "Father of the Nation" and the "author of Nationalism and that his drain theory has taught us how the "English had sucked our life blood. Gokhale's embrace of poverty is out of his sense of patriotism and Tyabji "through the Congress, sowed the seed of Home Rule". He insists that "a nation that is desirous of securing Home Rule cannot afford to despise its ancestors". Gandhi also endorses the role played by Hume and Wedderburn in the rise and development of Congress nationalism and does not see anything inconsistent if the Indians and British could work together and nourish Indian nationalism. He acknowledges that "many Englishmen desire Home Rule for India". The British who have made India their home deserve fair treatment which the Extremists and the Revolutionary nationalists deny. Gandhi also dismisses in the *Hind Swaraj*, the extremists as retrograde and irresponsible and terms the anarchists and the terrorists as a lunatic fringe of the Indian political scene. Rejecting both these two positions he supports the programme, ideals and the methods of the moderate elements in the Congress in India.

Gandhi established the Natal Indian Congress modelled after the Indian National Congress in South Africa and followed strictly the well known British practice of 'prayer, petition and protest'. In the footsteps of the early liberals like Rammohun, Gokhale and Surendranath Bannerjee, Gandhi acknowledges that the British connection with India is providential and that Indians are actually "proud to be under the British crown because they think that England will prove India's deliverer". Gandhi, like the early liberals, had total faith in the 'British love of justice and fair play' and the British constitutional practice of equality before law applies not just to British citizens but for all. Racial discrimination is 'Un British' and does not have the sanction of the British constitutional practice. He differentiates between the localisms of the British bureaucracy in India from the larger British constitutional practice. He idolises the British constitution as it guarantees individual freedom and racial equality. He desires that India graduate to equal partnership with the Empire and by helping the British, India could qualify for *swarajya* or self-rule.

During his stint in South Africa, Gandhi tried to remind the British that racial discrimination is a violation of the letter and spirit of the British constitution. His technique of *Satyagraha* is also an offshoot of his understanding of both British history and character. Convinced that redress of grievances could be expected only when people demonstrate their willingness to suffer to getting relief underlines his philosophy of *satyagraha*. Taking a leaf from the British Suffragists, he asks the Indians in South Africa to emulate them by developing a capacity

to endure suffering. Gandhi points out to the century-long struggle laced with suffering and sacrifice that the British women waged to secure the right to vote and which eventually compelled the British government to concede to the demand of the Suffragists. Many years later, he recollects that “an Englishman never respects you till you stand up to him. Then, he begins to like you. He is afraid of nothing physical, but he is mortally afraid of his own conscience, if even you appeal to it and show him to be in the wrong. He does not like to be rebuked for wrong doing at first, but he will think over it, and it will get hold of him and hurt him till he does something to put it right”.

Gandhi is categorical that the technique of *Satyagraha* is most effective if used against the British though it could be used everywhere and be an alternative to war in resolving conflict. Writing in 1904, he observes “Earnestness commands success everywhere. It does so much more in the British Dominions. If the British machinery is slow to move, the genius of the nation being conservative, it is also quick to perceive and recognize earnestness and unity”. Reflecting on this again in 1907, he points out that the British would concede if the people are willing to sacrifice even their lives for the cause. But they would ignore even the genuine demands, when they are merely verbal. Even in their own country the British follow the same principles. South Africa also teaches him two other basic lessons which he implements in India and they are: (a) united struggle of all irrespective of caste, creed and religion and (b) the sublime importance of open non-violent struggle.

Gandhi's innate respect for the British sense of justice continued even after his return to India and, during the First World War, he recruited soldiers for the British army unconditionally whereas, both Tilak and Jinnah refused to do so without any advancement of the nationalist cause. This confidence which he had in the ultimate British sense of justice was shattered by the horrors of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. However, in spite of this shock and his overall criticism of Western civilisation, and the parliamentary system, he proclaimed in 1921, that his immediate aim was parliamentary *swaraj*, whereas the rest was for a distant future. His faith in the British sense of fair play was shaken but not his faith about the feasibility of the essential mechanism of the British parliamentary institutions.

4.4 SELF-RULE: NEED TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE ELITE AND THE MASSES

For Gandhi, Nationalism meant self-rule in which the whole community and not just the elite would be free and active; in which soul force and not brute force is the basis of public order and in which national interest is the supreme ethical criterion of state action. He rejects the proposition that a government by national elite is beneficial simply because it is a government by the national elite as evident from his virulent criticism of the Indian princes whose tyranny is worse than that of the British. Reminding the Reader in the *Hind Swaraj*, he points out “you will admit that the people under several Indian princes are being ground down. The latter mercilessly crush them. Their tyranny is greater than that of the English”. Similarly he rejects the violent methods of Revolutionary nationalists by criticism of Madan Lal Dhingra and says ‘those who will rise to power by murder will certainly not make the nation happy’. He insists that the soul force is more effective than brute force and cites the example of Tulsidas' message of *daya* (compassion) as the true ultimate basis of *dharma*. He is pragmatic enough to understand that state violence cannot be completely eliminated but suggests that whatever violence the state may have to exercise must be exercised in the interest of the people as a whole, and not just in the interest of the national elite and that too, strictly within the parameters of *daya*. He stresses on the right balance between *daya*

and national interest. The error of modern nationalism is its separation which is why the elite act in a manner that is detrimental to the masses.

In defining a nation, Gandhi advances the real meaning of *swaraj* as mental condition and an external condition. As mental condition it means: (1) inner liberation from the temptations of greed and power which modern civilisation offers; (2) freedom from hatred towards the national 'enemy', the British and (3) of active love for the Indian masses. *Swaraj* as external condition is (1) political independence from alien domination and (2) of life-long dedication to the task of improving the material conditions of poverty and caste oppression of the Indian people.

Swaraj is not replacing the English sahibs with Indian 'brown' sahibs as that is tantamount to 'English rule without the Englishman; of wanting the tiger's nature but not the tiger; of making India English and when that happens it will be called not Hindustan but Englishstan'. He reminds of Mazzini's vision of freedom which involves the whole of Italian people different from that of Garibaldi and his associates of merely driving the Austrians by force of arms. Gandhi says "I am sure you do not wish to reproduce such a condition (as that of modern Italy) in India.... I believe that you want the millions of Indians to be happy, not that you want the reins of Government in your hands".

Swaraj is not merely getting rid of the British but also the fascination for modern civilisation which teaches the Indian elite to oppress the Indian people. The *Hind Swaraj* proposes nineteen points in the last chapter that involves the moral transformation of the Indian elite and addresses it to the professional classes- the doctors, lawyers, scientists, administrators, politicians and business executives- to become instruments of service to the nation first and aspiring for money or status as secondary. The pursuit of *artha* or money has to be within the framework of *dharma* which means adopting machinery for national development that is conducive to the health of the body and soul, the well-being of the weak and the poor and not just the wealthy and the powerful. Gandhi's stress on *Khadi* symbolises this requirement. *Swaraj* means self-reform, constitutional reforms and economic reforms. His commitment to truth as he sees it teaches him to appreciate the beauty of compromise which he underlines as the essence of *satyagraha*. There is close link between *swaraj* and *satyagraha* as the latter is the key to the realisation of the former. The former is self-rule and the latter is the way in which the individual, through voluntary self-sacrifice may gain control over himself. Extended into the political realm, it strengthens the individual soul force as he offers civil disobedience against the government. Stressing on ends and means, Gandhi insists that the lofty goal of *swaraj* is attained only if there is the purest of means.

Gandhi's ideal with the village as the basis of *swaraj* underlines the message of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The ideal village should produce its own food and cloth; should have reserve for its cattle, playgrounds for adults and children, its own theatre, school and water works. Each activity in it will be carried on cooperative basis. "Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers... self sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world".

In 1931, Gandhi outlined the nature of legislative organisation for the Indian nation in his speech at the Second Round Table Conference as follows: 'each village would elect its own representatives to form an electorate for further election to the central or the federal legislature. It would be analogous to the pattern for the constitution of the All India Congress Committee where the villages elect their own little committees and these in turn

would elect the taluk committees, followed by district councils which elect provincial councils. These would finally send their members to the central legislature. Only the villages could be practitioners of *swadeshi*; the villagers earn their bread labour and lead simple lives in the absence of machinery, doctors, railways and lawyers, and markets selling consumer goods'.

Tagore criticises Gandhi's directives regarding them to be medieval. The emphasis on simplicity would retard economic development, as the narrow form of *swadeshi* would result in restrictive provincial attitude, isolationism and provide unnecessary hostility in the rest of the world. He does not agree with Gandhi's assertion that 80% of the Indian people were peasants and that for six months in a year they did not have meaningful work. It is neither wise that the middle class spend their free time spinning the yarn. He questions the desirability of the spinning-wheel. Tagore is convinced that Gandhi's plans would lead to India's isolation preventing western knowledge and advancement from reaching India. In response to these charges, Gandhi replied that Indian nationalism is not exclusive, nor aggressive, nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious and therefore humanitarian. He defends the use of spinning-wheel as that is the only way to 'realise' the essential and living oneness of interest among India's myriads. Its purposes are to symbolise 'sacrifice for the whole nation'. Regarding narrow provincialism and the dangers of this kind of nationalism, Gandhi says: "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown off my feet by any". Gandhi does not regard his patriotism to be exclusive: 'it is calculated not to hurt any other nation but to benefit all in the true sense of the word. India's freedom as conceived by me can never be a menace to the world". Gandhi sees nation as consisting of individual human components and not, as Dalton states it, "as a transcendent entity, possessed of a soul and a form of freedom of its own. He thinks of *swaraj* first in terms of the individual and then in terms of society. He says '*swaraj* of the people means the sum total of the *swaraj* (self-rule) of individuals. He also stresses on social reform for attaining *swaraj* and foremost among the aims of social reform are what he calls the three pillars of *swaraj*: Hindu-Muslim unity, the abolition of untouchability and the uplift of India's villages.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Jayantnuja Bandhopadhyaya identifies six ideals of Indian nationalism and these are: (1) anti-imperialism (2) anti-racism (3) Asianism (4) internationalism (5) non-violence and (6) democracy. These ideals found their fullest exposition under Gandhi's leadership. It is the strength of these ideals that prevented the international communist movement from making any significant headway in India between the Russian Revolution of 1917 and Independence of India in 1947. The two most important ideological points of Indian nationalism are anti-imperialism and democracy and for most, non-violence a tactic rather than a policy. Anti-imperialism remains the fundamental aim of Indian nationalism.

The Marxists by accusing Gandhi of being bourgeois overlooked his role as a social critic and his protest against existing inequalities and the constructive programmes aimed at eliminating existing social evils. For Gandhi the causes of disparities in the Indian society are due to imperialistic exploitation and the limitation of the capitalist industrialised civilisation of the West. By concentrating on the political aspects of his personality, the Marxists missed the critic Gandhi, who felt deeply the acute disparities in the Indian society and tried to resolve them in his own way. Nirmal Kumar Bose argues that Gandhi defies classification as the prophet of bourgeois nationalism in India. First, the means that Gandhi employed are

such that they will lead successfully to the end only if the masses become self-acting towards the latter part of the revolution. And the chances are that if the masses gain success through their fully developed conscious strength, they will also refuse to be exploited in future by anybody who wishes to ride upon their back. Second, Gandhi did not want India to benefit at the expense of any other nation. He considered humanity as one family. Therefore, according to Bose, Gandhi transcended bourgeois nationalism.

Gandhi, like Vivekananda and Aurobindo, accepts the proposition that it is in the nature of man to struggle for self-realisation or spiritual freedom. This is the highest aim of the individual and how he attains the conquest of his self is the key to success. Gandhi also stresses that political independence by itself is incomplete unless accompanied by a moral or spiritual transformation of the individual in society. Not only does Gandhi insist on moral progress but also in the elimination of slave mentality. Equally important is the social reform, with the help of constructive programme, to realising the three pillars of *swaraj* and thus establishes close link between freedom and social harmony.

4.6 SUMMARY

Gandhi rejects the popular perception that 'India has become a nation under the British rule' and disputes the claim of those who argue that India is a nation after the British introduced western ideas and to the changes brought about by modern means of communication such as the railways and the telegraph. His claim that India is nation is based on two assumptions of an all India consciousness. He insists on the need to encourage Indian languages and developing Hindustani as the *lingua franca* and the mother-tongue has to be the primary basis of the cultural life of each 'province'. Gandhi pleads for religious pluralism and allowing every religion to freely profess and practice what they consider as truth. Gandhi also dismisses in the *Hind Swaraj*, the extremists as retrograde and irresponsible and terms the anarchists and the terrorists as a lunatic fringe of the Indian political scene. Rejecting both these two positions he supports the programme, ideals and the methods of the moderate elements in the Congress in India. For Gandhi, Nationalism means self-rule in which the whole community is involved and not just the elite. Gandhi insisted on moral progress and the elimination of slave mentality. Equally important is social reform with the help of constructive programme to realising *swaraj* and thus establishes close link between freedom and social harmony.

4.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- 1) How does Gandhi perceive India as a nation?
- 2) What is Gandhi's assessment of the Indian National Congress?
- 3) Why did Gandhi admire the British political institutions and practices?
- 4) What does Gandhi mean by self-rule?
- 5) Why does Gandhi insist that there is a need to bridge the gap between the elite and the masses to bring about self-rule?

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