



Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*: A Philosophical Appraisal

Ratikanta Panda¹

Received: 28 October 2016 / Revised: 27 January 2020 / Accepted: 15 July 2020 / Published online: 23 July 2020
© ICPR 2020

Abstract

This paper is a study of Gandhi's "*Hind Swaraj*" to bring out the philosophical significance of the concept of *Swaraj*. Gandhi has laid down his philosophy of life in this work which defines the concept of self-rule and also the concept of political and economic freedom. The *Hind Swaraj* is Gandhi's manifesto for Indian freedom struggle since it lays down the principles of *Satyagraha*, namely *Satya* and *Ahimsa*. In this paper, an attempt is made to show how Gandhi harmonizes the political and economic freedom with spiritual freedom. Gandhi emphasizes the soul-force as the new principle for the emancipation of the Indian masses in addition to their economic and political freedom.

Keywords *Satyagraha* · *Swaraj* · *Satya* · *Ahimsa* · Soul-force

Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi is one of those few luminaries who have made original contribution in not only raising the stature of one's culture and civilization in the eyes of the world, but also providing it strength and stability to sustain that raising for ages to come. Gandhi was a visionary who had the farsightedness to perceive the destiny of his motherland after decades. Having given to the Indian freedom struggle the weapons of *Satyagraha* and *Ahimsa*, he devised the system of peaceful revolution for the first time in the history of the world. *Ahimsa* or Non-violence is in fact the biggest achievement of Gandhi in the war-ridden world. With this weapon of *Ahimsa*, he mobilized around 20 million people of India against their British rulers. He not only successfully used these weapons, but proved them as an answer to war-ridden cultures of early twentieth century.

This paper focuses on the reactions of Gandhi against the Western civilization. Gandhi in his *Hind Swaraj* remarked, "If India copies England, it is my firm conviction that she will be ruined. It is not due to any peculiar fault of the English people,

✉ Ratikanta Panda
ratikanta@iitb.ac.in

¹ Department of Humanities and Social Science, IIT Bombay, Mumbai, India

but the condition is due to modern civilization. It is a civilization only in name. Under it the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day”.¹ Gandhi opposes the industrial revolution, which brought into existence the modern Western civilization. Prior to industrial revolution, as Gandhi remarks, “Men worked in open air....Now thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories and mines. Their condition is worse than that of beasts. They are obliged to work-for the sake of millionaires”.² It is quite clear that Gandhi disliked India turning into a capitalistic country. As he remarked: “It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller would be better than an American Rockefeller”.³

Gandhi’s ideas about culture are significant in the view of the fact that his revolutionary ideas came in the time when the world was ravaged with two world wars and there was chaos all over, with respect not only to political, but also to social, economic and cultural as well. People had lost faith in their own selves. There was growing discontentment among the disappointed youth of the Europe, the struggling masses of colonial countries like Africa and India, etc. Gandhi gave a new hope to the distressed masses by saying that war was not the solution to any problem.

Gandhi expresses his ideas on culture mainly in *Hind Swaraj* wherein he criticizes the modern Western culture and brings out the merits of Indian culture. Therein also, he lays down the principles of *Ahimsa* and *Satya* as the foundational elements of Indian culture. He does not, however, discredit Western civilization as a whole; he rather tries to bring out the shortcomings of the modern industrial civilization of the West. Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj* is a critique of modernity and not of Western civilization as such. However, modernity is best represented by the modern Western civilization. So Gandhi rejects the latter in no uncertain terms.

The Critique of Modern Western Civilization

Culture for Gandhi is more a living ideal than just an accumulation of values and codes transmitted from generation to generation through customs and traditions. Gandhi takes culture and civilization almost synonymously. Civilization for Gandhi is, “that mode of conduct which points to man the path of duty”.⁴ And this is what is absent from modern European culture. The modern Western culture, according to Gandhi, is governed by two basic principles, namely “might is right” and “survival of the fittest”. These two principles govern every sphere of life of the Western people, be it politics, culture or economics, for this might is not just physical, but intellectual as well. This has not only led to the lust for acquiring more and more power,

¹ Notes and References

Gandhi, M. K. *Hind Swaraj*, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. X, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1963, p. 18.

² *Ibid*, p. 20.

³ *Ibid*, p. 58.

⁴ Gandhi, M. K. *Hind Swaraj*, Chapter VIII, in “*The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. IV, Ed. Shriman Narayan, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1968, p. 150.

but also given rise to cut-throat competition in which only those can survive, who are the fittest. This has resulted in moral and spiritual degeneration of the human race.

Comparing Indian and Western cultures, Gandhi remarks: “The tendency of Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality”.⁵ This, according to Gandhi, has been the legacy of the Western civilization in the modern times and is responsible for the deepest moral crisis ever encountered in the history of mankind. But, this has affected not only the European races, but all the races across the world. Its direct results can be seen right here in India. Before the advent of the Europeans, Indians used to lead a simple life, made their livelihood by the toil of their hands and lived peacefully. However, with the arrival of the English, the whole scenario changed. The British brought with them not just sophisticated weapons to fight, but factories and railways that made life more miserable than before. Gandhi has criticized the mechanistic culture of the modern West and has shown how this culture has destroyed not only the values long cherished in the West, but also ideals and values of other non-Western cultures such as Indian and other Eastern cultures.

Gandhi’s critique of industrialization stems, firstly, from his civilizational background and, secondly, from his personal philosophy of life. Gandhi belonged to the time (when he wrote *Hind Swaraj* in 1909) when India had experienced newly the impacts of Western Civilization as it was colonized by the British. It was the time when Indians, on their own, had started visiting England and other Western countries for education and for livelihood. The experience they used to have deeply impacted their own personal views and of those back in India. The coming of facilities like hospitals, post offices, railways, industries, textile mills, tea gardens, etc., along with Judicial and Educational Services in the form of Courts and Universities, was something that was utterly new to Indian masses. No doubt that Indian mind was overwhelmed by its arrival and also that the Indians were fully mesmerized by the dazzling new machinery. It is against this background that Gandhi chooses to condemn Western industrialized society.

Gandhi’s personal philosophy of life also is responsible for his critique of industrial civilization. According to his philosophy of life, soul is more precious than gross matter, and the true striving of a human being, in the spirit of Vedas and Upanishads, should be for self-realization, not for pursuing fleeting pleasures obtained out of possessing material goods. Thus, his critiques stem from his ceaseless comparison of the modern Western civilization with the classical Indian civilization which emphasized the supremacy of the spiritual life over the material life. In comparison between the modern West and the ancient India, the latter always triumphed over the former so far as the idea of a good life is concerned. According to Gandhi, while the ancient Indian culture emphasized the self-realization of the soul as the primary goal of a human being, the modern Western civilization preferred material gains over the spiritual values.

⁵ Gandhi, M. K., *Hind Swaraj* as quoted in *Gandhi and the Modern World* by Prof. Ramjee Singh, Classical Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1988, p. 154.

There is a basic difference between the two civilizations which Gandhi has brought out in clear terms in his *Hind Swaraj*. According to Gandhi, Indian civilization has always respected nature and has worshipped it in different forms as it is evident in the Vedic literature. That is the reason why the ancient Indian seers saw divinity in nature. But Western civilization has treated nature as an object to be exploited for the benefit of mankind. Nature has been treated in the Bible as an instrument for the survival of the mankind. That is why there is a general tendency in the West to treat nature as subservient to the human interest as it is proved by modern science. Gandhi has denounced this anthropocentric world view of the modern scientific and technological civilization of the West.

The Loss of Spiritual Values

Modern civilization of the West, according to Gandhi, is not a spiritually healthy civilization; it is afflicted by a “spiritual disease” which is fast penetrating into very vitals of its culture. It is represented by its two dominant themes, namely “ceaseless activity” and its ambition of “annihilation of space and time”⁶. People are always rushing to their destination, but they never reach it, for they themselves do not know what is their true aim in life. They are merely running from one place to another. They are busy in endless activity with no purpose in mind. This mechanistic culture of the West has brought women, for example, who are “queen of the household” into the dark alleys of the factories, or has forced them to, “wander in the streets” as prostitutes just for the sake of, “pittance”⁷.

Gandhi condemns nearly all the facets of the modern civilization, be it housing and dwelling, textile factories, improvements in medicine and judiciary, but above all he condemns the general tendency of the modern people to run after material goods. His critique of science and technology stems from his observance of the fact that science and technology have been divorced from ethical values which are required for a healthy human society. As he saw, science had just flamed the passions of the masses in the West for more material goods; it had increased the volume and nature of their wants and weakened the bonds between human beings. The advancement in science had thus propagated more evil in the minds of the modern man than joining them in a common fraternity. What it all produced was rapid and large-scale industrialization, flooding of the markets by all irrelevant goods, increasing the use of machines, thus making man dependent upon them more and more, and automation in every part of life, thus making human life more and more mechanical.

These were the facets of the modern Western civilization that were mostly overlooked by those who regarded it as an epitome of an ideal human civilization on the earth. Although some such aspects were also critiqued by Marx and Engels in their writings, basically, their aim was to make people materially happy instead of

⁶ Gandhi, M. K., *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. VI, Ed. Shriman Narayan, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1968, p. 277.

⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. 4, p. 121.

spiritually so. Here, Gandhi parts his way with their thinking and denounces communism along with capitalism of the West. He was enamoured by the simple life of an Indian villager who lives in his own home and hearth, produces his own food in his field and spins his own clothes in his yard, because in this life higher ideals of human life are sought after and practiced which are not material, but spiritual. Because in the modern Western civilization, there is no place for these ideals, Gandhi chooses to side with Indian civilization. All the technological advances are thus berated by Gandhi as these seek to replace the higher ideals of humanity with the crass material gains to be obtained from amassing material goods. Even in war, these advances are of no good, since one man can destroy the entire battalion by hiding behind a rock and using just his gun aimed at that battalion. The modern system of medicine and judiciary is equally damned. Doctors exploit their helpless patients, and lawyers cheat the clients shamelessly. Even the printing business is not without faults. Now everybody writes and prints whatever he likes to without considering the worth of what he has written, and thus, “poisons the minds of the people”. The growth which this civilization boasts of, according to Gandhi, is nothing but amassing of wealth, raising up of buildings, establishing of factories, where a millions of men and women work day and night and whose condition is worse than even of a brute. Machinery, in the words of Gandhi, is the, “chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin”.⁸ It has torn apart man from men and compartmentalized them into workers and the mill owners, thus giving rise to class conflict between them.

Gandhi inveighs at length against the mechanistic tendency of modern Western culture, which has ruined not only Europe, but is knocking at the doors of India as well, first signs of which are disappearance of handicrafts from Indian households and markets. Workers in Bombay mills work like slaves for the few millionaires. The rapid industrialization on mass scale has told upon not only their physical, but spiritual well-being as well. It has given rise to unnecessary competition which transforms gradually into their very survival condition. Because of this, “survival of the fittest” theory comes into play in social spheres, which, according to Gandhi, is the rendering of Western civilization to the whole world. Only those remain to survive in this industrial civilization which can forge the tools better, use armaments better than others and produce insanely on a mass scale for the unknown consumers and for the benefit of a few capitalists, against the unknown. Those who have a little awareness of their being exploited and have courage to voice their concern are silently eliminated out of the mainstream such that by their elimination not even a bubble in the water is created. Gandhi voices his worry as, “The present distress is undoubtedly insufferable. Pauperism must go. But industrialism is no remedy”.⁹ At the root of all this chaos is industrialism and blind forging of machinery which has driven everything that was essential to a human being. It has made them not only mechanistic, but strained their relations with other human beings as well by giving rise to class struggles, competition and increasing desire to possess more than the

⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. 4, p. 87.

⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. VI, Ch. 46, p. 402.

others. It tries to justify the possession of goods and pleasures by a few people at the cost of whole strata of society beneath them. It justifies the hoarding of money by a millionaire and wailing of the people on the streets because he is out of the mechanism of production and consumption. It justifies the large-scale migration of poor people from their villages and their dumping in the dark factories and poverty-ridden damp slums for a few pittance at the end of the month. It justifies the death of humanism from its people mindlessly going and coming out of factories of mass production without feeling, without thinking and without having any aim in life.

The modern Western civilization, according to Gandhi, has thus not produced anything of worth for its people. All that it has managed to produce and which is its sole achievement so far is the weapons of mass destruction. Side by side, it can boast of having produced anarchy in the world, bloody conflicts between ruling and the ruled classes, be it owners and the labourers, or the governments and the masses, and the cruel slaughter of animals in the name of scientific experimentation. Thus, there is widespread violence as a result of the mass production of weapons of all sorts.

Although Gandhi deliberately and very consciously denounces industrial civilization which is the hallmark of the modern West, it is not that he is against every aspect of the Western civilization. Were it so, he could have been equally charged with the adoption of the machinery even in the case of cottage industries which he prefers. The machine for spinning *Khadi* is also a kind of machine, though on a small scale. Gandhi, in this regard, clears his stand when he says, “I have no quarrel with steamships or telegraphs. They must stay, if they can, without the support of industrialism and all it connotes. They are not an end” because, “they are in no way indispensable for the permanent welfare of the human race”.¹⁰ It is rather the “exploitation” associated with industrialism that Gandhi is against. Exploitation has many forms; it starts from the capitalist’s exploitation of the workers, then it becomes the exploitation by rich of the poor, by the urban of the villager, and it gradually extends to exploitation by rich nations of the poor ones, and then of “sister nations by sister nations”.¹¹

Man Versus Machine

Exploitation cannot be separated from industrialism according to Gandhi, for it is that evil that is born with the disease of industrialism itself. Even the remedy of socialism cannot cure the “inherent evils”¹² industrialism. For Gandhi, “That use of machinery is lawful which sub-serves the interest of all”.¹³ An improvement in the hand-driven plough is not a sin, but what if a man, by his invention of some mechanistic plough, were to plough all the land and thus gaining control of all the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 378.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

agricultural produce of India, what will happen then? Not only the people would starve, but a millions of them would be rendered unemployed by one person's stroke of hand. One man would become God of the millions under him and thus enjoy an unquestionable suzerainty over them, which would manifest in his exploitation of them. It is this subsequent exploitation which Gandhi is against, because the evils of all industrialization and machinery are manifest in the exploitation of the humanity.

Machinery, according to Gandhi, "is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it represents a great sin".¹⁴ In a culture, where machines are valued over humans, profit over the humanity, imperialism is the natural end and aim of that civilization and the modern Western culture truly exhibits that. He was not only conscious to the fact as to how machinery can degrade and replace human beings, but also foresighted enough to see capitalism sowing seeds of imperialism. Machinery itself is not bad, but the abuse of it is which makes it bad, and the abuses are so often and so frequent that its owners have forgotten already the honest use of machinery at all. It alienates not only the workers from their surroundings, but the owners from their employees such that the plight of workers never comes across the sight of rich owners. Marx and Engels, too, had pointed out the same defects in their classic *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848.

Marx and Engels maintained that contemporary capitalist system was prejudiced and unfair to the needs of those working in it. It keeps a semblance of free economy in the sense that workers are free to sell their labour in return of which they get their wages. But, in fact, they are not free; rather, it is a disguised form of exploitation of the workers. Workers, though, sell their labour, but they are not free to sell on the wages they deserve. They are not given choice to demand equal wages according to the work they provide. Thus, it leads to their exploitation. It is because of that disguised exploitation that Marx and Engels had criticized capitalism and called for a revolution so as to establish socialism in its place. It is this same exploitation that Gandhi also denounces, which is the result of industrialization and machinery. However, instead of bloody revolution of Marx and Engels, Gandhi calls for a peaceful revolution in society through the application of the method of *Satyagraha*.

Against these evils of the modern Western culture, Gandhi seeks to present before the world a model which at the same time not only is humanist, but also has the capability to stand the ravages of time. And that model is underlying Indian culture in its purest form Gandhi was against the poor imitation of the West which is prevalent in the modern Indian culture. He is one of the contemporary Indian thinkers who want to revive India that stood firmly on its ancient footings and that too with pride. In the words of S. Radhakrishnan:

He came to represent India to an amazing degree, and to express the very spirit of that ancient and tortured land. Almost he was India, and his very failings were Indian failings. A slight to him was hardly a personal matter, it was an insult to the nation.¹⁵

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Vol. 4, *Hind Swaraj*, Chapter 19—"Machinery", p. 189.

¹⁵ Radhakrishnan, S., "*Mahatma Gandhi*" from *Facets of Gandhi*, Ed. B. K. Ahluwalia, Lakshmi Book Store, New Delhi, 1968, p. 18.

What makes Gandhi great is the fact that the vein in which he condemns Western culture is not altered when he comes down to look at what is going on around him in his own culture. It is one thing to adore and worship one's culture and its past glories and quite another to abide by its norms. Gandhi did not give up the eternal values enshrined in Indian culture in the name of modernity.

Gandhi notes with regret that Western culture has landed too heavily on the Indian mind, but such is due not to the superiority of the Western culture, but the wholehearted acceptance of the Western values by Indian mind itself. He voices this regret in *Hind Swaraj*, when he says, "The English have not taken India; we have given them".

He looks around at hordes of educated Indians who denounce their culture as backward and ancient and for whom reading Shakespeare and Milton is more of a pride than leafing through *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*. Among the contemporary Indians, Gandhi steadfastly stood for the ancient values of India because he found in them the origin of the new philosophy of *Satyagraha* which he intended to put into practice for the liberation of India.

The Idea of *Swaraj*

Gandhi's vision of India stemmed from her ancient glory that was still living in her traditional culture. He put in high esteem the Vedic values of *Ahimsa* and *Satya*, above lust and power that leads to the desire of mastering the other. When such a desire is nurtured and exhibited collectively, the result is one nation attacking the other and making it its colony. For that reason, Gandhi sought to wipe out entirely the individualistic passions of lust and power and replace it with love for humanity that is displayed through non-violence towards other beings and truthfulness that helps man to have pride in his values. Gandhi made these values the foundation for *Swaraj*. In this sense, he took *Swaraj* out of its political and social context and placed it in the moral and spiritual settings.

For Gandhi, *Swaraj* should be taken in the moral and spiritual sense of freedom or autonomy and only later in the political and social sense of freedom. *Swaraj* taken thus literally means one's own rule, i.e. one's own rule, self-rule. Politically, it means Home Rule, or in the context of the Indian struggle for freedom, rule of the Indians over their own country instead of British.

Bidyut Chakraborty goes to the historical roots of *Swaraj* and tries to find out the reason as to why the idea of *Swaraj* came at all?¹⁶ His findings are illuminating and relevant to the topic as well. The ideal of *Swaraj* as propounded by Gandhi, according to Chakraborty, served an important purpose of defying the old Western perspective according to which India could never become a nation. India had a long-standing history of serving foreign rulers, and because of its breathtaking diversity, the West had come to believe that India could never become a nation—a whole, unified nation, having its own government and its own rule. Gandhi's ideal of

¹⁶ Chakraborty, Bidyut, *Social and Political Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi*, Routledge, 2006.

Swaraj served this purpose of giving a framework first of all whereby Indian people could dream about their own nation and government. It was a political concept in this sense. Secondly, it was the freedom movement and increasing awareness about democratization going on in India that helped up in springing and shaping up the ideal of *Swaraj*. But what Chakraborty misses is the fact that in Indian context, the shape of the concept of nation undergoes drastic change, although it was born due to colonization and freedom movement. As the political dimension of the freedom movement was more dominating than the other dimensions, the concept of nation came to have its political meanings. Gandhi, however, when he enunciated *Swaraj*, considered not only the political, but also the social and economic aspect and thus made *Swaraj* stand for self-rule not only in political matters, but in social and economic affairs of the masses as well. This extension of nationhood was peculiar to the Gandhian conception only as it had hitherto been found nowhere in the world.

In these dimensions, *Swaraj* had its obvious advantages. It worked as a leveller whereby all the contesting and marginalized sections of the massive Indian society were brought under one fold and on equal footing. Despite unbridgeable differences between different strata of Indian society based upon social, economic and cultural factors, it mobilized people to a common cause which was the overthrowing of the British yoke and the attainment of freedom. Although Gandhi never gave any explicit definition of *Swaraj*, its expression otherwise is very articulate, but scattered. In different journals and in different pieces, does Gandhi write about *Swaraj*. It is from these scattered writings that the doctrine of *Swaraj* is culled out and presented here. *Swaraj* had its multifarious dimensions. On the one hand, in the political sphere it meant

1. Freedom from the British,
2. Freedom from economic oppressors like money-lenders and mill owners,
3. Freedom from social oppressors like customs and traditions.

But, on the other hand, it also meant spiritual freedom which is the freedom from passions and desires. In this context, by *Swaraj* Gandhi means “complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So, at the one end you have political independence and at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, and the corresponding end is Dharma, i.e. religion, in the highest sense of the term.”¹⁷

The concept of *Swaraj* includes all the four facets of an individual’s life—political, economic, social and spiritual. All these aspects are interconnected and constitute one wholesome ideal of *Swaraj*. Whereas the political *Swaraj* was comprehensively enunciated in the ideal of *Satyagraha*, second had its expression in the ideal of *Swadeshi* and third in the ideal of *Sarvodaya*. The spiritual freedom is achieved only after the achievement of the political, economic and social freedom. Thus, all the first three became means towards achieving the fourth. According to Gandhi,

¹⁷ *Harijan*, 27 May 1939.

self-rule or *Swaraj* is the process of removing internal barriers to human freedom. Self-rule presupposes the agency of the spirit (individual *atman*). The spirit exerts its influence on the empirical ego, on emotions, mind and intelligence. Under the influence of the spirit, the inner powers of the moral agent become integrated, such that he or she becomes a spiritually aware person, guided by true self-knowledge. The process by which the spirit integrates the inner faculties has a dynamic quality, which is suitably expressed by the concept of “ruling”. Hence, the terminology of self-rule, *Swaraj*. The spirit or the higher self “rules” the lower self or the empirical ego.

Gandhi derived the four facets of *Swaraj* from numerous sources as has been enunciated by Anthony J. Parel in his remarkable essay, “Gandhian Freedoms and Self-Rule”.¹⁸ He finds these sources to be both Indian and Western. As Gandhi was a true devotee of ancient Indian culture and tradition, he derived the fourth aspect of *Swaraj*, namely the spiritual one from the Vedas and the Upanishads in which the individual is expected to contain his passions and desires within limits, thus having complete control on himself. He drew this ideal of self-control from the ideals of self-realization found in mostly all of the orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, be it Vedanta, Mimamsa or Yoga. But Gandhi did not merely reiterate the ideal; he transformed rather it into a potent instrument of social change. In this ideal, the needs of the individual are not only spiritual, but political and economic as well.

In this context, it is necessary to clarify whether in Gandhi’s model of spirituality enunciated in his philosophy of *Satyagraha* the political and economic needs are more important than the spiritual ones. Gandhi did think of an integral spiritual life in which there is a complete harmonization of the political and economic needs with the spiritual ones. It is true that following the ancient model of *purusharthas*, he did not posit a hierarchy of values. He took the values of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* within a harmonious web of values, both practical and transcendental. That is a significant aspect of Gandhian model of spirituality.

The ideal of *Satyagraha* can be taken as the greatest contribution of Gandhi. In the contemporary scenario, when India was suppressed under the British yoke and had been under servitude since the first invaders centuries back before the British, there was no point of glorifying spiritual ideals when the masses were writhing in pain for freedom and basic human rights. When the spiritual ideal was initiated by those orthodox schools, the situation was different as the country was not under any foreign or indigenous suppression. Had it been so, perhaps, their ideal would also have been the overthrowing the oppressor and the attainment of freedom as it has been the case in the history of mankind. Gandhi was aware of the fact that spirituality makes no sense in the absence of political and economic freedom. Therefore, Gandhi did his best to make spiritual freedom go along with political and economic freedom.

Gandhi realized that spiritual freedom was the true goal of a human being, but he did not lose sight of the fact that unless and until an individual is free in his daily life, no higher freedom can be expected within his reach. For this reason, he made

¹⁸ Parel, Anthony J., Ed., *Gandhi, Freedom and Self-Rule*, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p. 1.

political and economic freedom a means to spiritual freedom. This ideal of political freedom can be traced in Gandhian thought from the Western sources as remarked by Parel. According to Parel, since Indian culture never had the notion of democracy, or masses as the source of power and authority, and since India had always been a monarchy where king is the only source of all authority, the idea of political freedom could not have come the native soil of India. It could be a Western idea which Gandhi imbibed from his study of the Western political literature and from his subsequent struggles in South Africa which might have enabled him to get first-hand impressions of democracy in those countries.

Parel offers a reasonable interpretation of Gandhi's political philosophy, although he nowhere mentions the influence of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Karl Marx whose writings had great impact on Gandhi, especially in his formative period, and that was when he had already returned from South Africa. Their profound delineation of suppression of masses and need for individual's freedom in their writings had strong influence in shaping political thought of Gandhi which he repeatedly mentions in his writings in *Young India* and *Harijan*. Tolstoy's ideal of political freedom, Dostoevsky's ideal of individual's freedom and Marx's ideal of economic freedom were profound ideas which influenced Gandhi's philosophy of *Swaraj* and *Satyagraha*.

Conclusion

From the above analysis of Gandhi's thought, it becomes clear that among four different aspects of *Swaraj*, namely political, social, economic and spiritual, it is true that he gave equal emphasis on the four. However, Gandhi interprets *Swaraj* primarily as Self-Rule or Self-Control in personal matters. As he says in *Hind Swaraj*, "Real home rule is the self-rule or self-control".¹⁹ It is control of one's desires and blind passions first which are necessary to make one a human being in the true sense. A man whose mind is a slave to passions cannot attain freedom in any other sense. Man should be such that he stands by his own values, how so much old and crude they might appear, and take decision on his own, without bowing mentally before the foreign mentors. This freedom from political subjugation can come only from following the path of self-rule. It is this mental servitude that man needs first to free himself from. In *Young India*, he writes, "Self-government depends entirely upon our internal strength, upon our ability to fight against the heaviest odds".²⁰ The way to such a freedom that comes from self-control, according to Gandhi, is "passive resistance" which he calls "soul-force" or "love-force"²¹ or popularly known as *Satyagraha*.

¹⁹ Gandhi, M. K. *Hind Swaraj*, Chapter XX, in "The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. IV, Ed. Shriman Narayan, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1968, p. 201.

²⁰ Gandhi, M. K., "Young India", 1 December 1927, from *Gandhi Reader for 1988*, Ed. M. V. Desai, Nameda Foundation, New Delhi, 1988.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 201.

Modern man has progressed in all external spheres of life with the help of science and technology. But there is no corresponding development to his inner life. Modern man has the control of the force of material nature, but there has been no simultaneous development of control over the inner psychological nature. Gandhi believes that radical change in inner consciousness of humanity can alone save it from its present predicament.

If human race does not evolve its spiritual culture and remains satisfied with material progress, it will surely perish. Unless human race is directed towards the spiritual freedom, its material pursuits cannot save mankind from self-destruction. If human race is to survive, there is no other alternative for it but to follow the Gandhian ideal of *Swaraj* and *Satyagraha*.

To sum up, Gandhi's message of spiritual freedom is the core of his *Hind Swaraj* because it alone serves as the foundation of all sorts of freedom such as political, social and economic.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.