

Concept of Swadeshi

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

Teaching Gandhian thought in an University

- The sociologist A.K. Saran felt that including Gandhi in the curriculum may destroy his subversive potential as a powerful critique of the establishment
- Gandhi had firm commitment to the destiny of humans and was not concerned about the prospects of any given civilization
- Another problem is that for academics used to complicated ideas and concepts
- Gandhi's writing may appear straightforward and a bit too moralistic for academic elaboration
- Gandhi was a man of action and his ideas evolved over time with new encounters.

Understanding Gandhian concepts

- He called his autobiography as 'The story of my experiments with truth,' giving it the character of something in the making
- His ideas and concepts written in simple language hence have to be understood in terms of his interventions over a period of time
- And in terms of the leaders, movements and institutions that it created throughout the world

Economy and society

- Questions relating to labor, economic production, consumption and technology were central to Gandhi's thinking
- The objects that Gandhi chose for his political struggle against colonialism were salt and cloth
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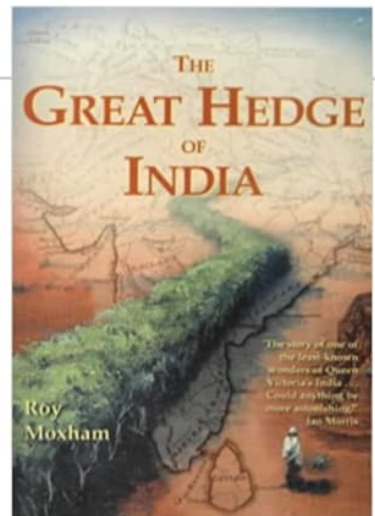
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Salt tax

- They were essential economic utilities on which British government held monopoly of production and earned revenue through unjust taxation

Moxham

The memoirs referred in passing to a great hedge planted across the Indian sub-continent, manned and cared for by 12,000 men. It stood for more than 50 years and, at its greatest extent, formed part of a barrier 2,500 miles long. One of the largest man-made constructions in human history it appears in no history books and today remains completely forgotten in both Britain and India.



Perfectability of man

- Concept of *Swadeshi* was woven around how production should be organized- Charkha is both an instrument and symbol
- Marx mentioned the charkha in his work as something that is both a machine and a tool
- Gandhi was Marx's contemporary in some sense – with a gap of 50 years
- Gandhi had similar concerns about exploitation and poverty but he believed in the intrinsic 'perfectability' of men, while Marx did not

Gandhi and Marx

Marx – sought to combine primitive social organization with modern science and technology

Gandhi – Thought that the factory based technology was oppressive by its very core as it required large capital investment and displaced labor

In the text Hind Swaraj written in his early days (1909) he is highly critical of modern science and technology

But his ideas about S&T kept evolving

He was seeking that kind of S&T that will not cause the value of human effort to disappear.

The ideas of Swaraj and Swadeshi are connected

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Selective Biographic details

1869 – born in Gujarat in a Bania family – married in 1883 when he was 14

1888 – 19 years old -Goes to London to study law – Excommunicated from his community for that in 1891

1891 – returns to India and leaves for Durban South Africa in 1893 to work as a lawyer in a shipping company – faces racial discrimination at the railway station

1894 – Found the Natal Indian Congress – enrolled as Barrister in the high court of Natal and starts campaign against anti-Indian racial laws

1910 – sets up Tolstoy farm – an idealistic community

1915 arrives in India and established Sabarmati Ashram

1917 – applies Satyagraha to fight for indigo plantation workers in Champaran, Bihar, and textiles in Ahmedabad

1920 Indian National congress adopts his policy of non-cooperation

1930 - 200 mile salt march to defy the British salt tax (Salt Satyagraha)

1934 Inaugurates All India village industries (fore runner of Khadi today) and Resigns from the Indian National Congress

Before Gandhi arrived the Indian National Congress was the haven of upper caste and elite politicians

He was pained by the poverty of the Indian masses – his appearance and habits became penitential expression of that pain – Austerity and simplicity – ‘Be the change you wish to see’

Satyagraha

1908 – develops the concept of *Satyagraha* (*Satya*- truth, *agraha*- holding on with polite firmness)

'Its root meaning is holding on to truth, hence truth-force. I have also called it love-force or soul-force.'

He distinguished it from passive resistance as practiced in the West; passive resistance does not necessarily involve complete adherence to truth under every circumstance.

'Satyagraha is a weapon of the strong; it admits of no violence under any circumstance whatsoever; and it ever insists upon truth'

Gandhi and sociologists

Gandhi was criticized by sociologists of his time

Shyamji Krishnavarma, a Spencerian criticized Gandhi for putting forth Christian ideals of suffering.

N.K.Bose was a Gandhian anthropologist who participated in the Salt Satyagraha broke up after he learnt of Gandhi's experiments on sexuality

Gandhi went to meet Ramakrishna Mukherji during his study of Industrial unrest - returned when he knew he had deputed research to assistants – For Gandhi fieldwork by the researcher was a direct mutual relationship between the researcher and researched - pursuit of truth

Amrit Srinivasan: 'Malinowski and Gandhi's approach to fieldwork' – Malinowski **irreversible** relation between subject and object of study. Gandhi '**reversible**' – that is mutual learning between researcher and researched

Influences

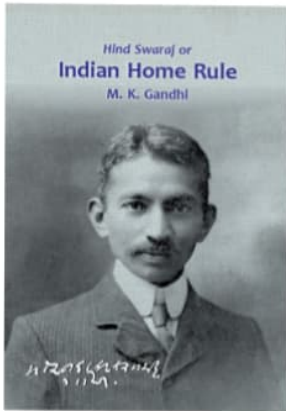
Leo Tolstoy (1894) - Christian ethic

John Ruskin (1860) – artist of nature and critic of industrial capitalism and Victorian era

Edward Carpenter (1889) Civilization its cause and cure

Thoreau (1907) Principles of civil disobedience – if you cannot eradicate evil never give support to evil

Active non violence of Christ versus passive non violence of Jain philosophy



Indians tend to hate the British people,
but love their modern civilization

Hind Swaraj

Hind Swaraj (275 pages) was written in Nov 1909 in 10 days during a ship journey from London to South Africa after his attempts to lobby for South African Indians in London for six months failed

First in Gujarati and translated by himself to English

Read and commented by many thinkers and leaders

It is some kind of a manifesto of his strong commitment to ahimsa or non-violence

Addressed to mixed audience – expatriate Indians committed to violent struggles, moderates in the Congress and the English

Was banned in British India for being seditious

Swaraj

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Swaraj is not just end of colonialism

Swaraj means two things:

- Home rule or the good state
- Self rule through self improvement

Gandhi was responding to extremists who wanted to send the British away but keep their military and political institutions

Political and social movement must have a component program for internal reform even as they struggle and fight against an oppressor

The old Indian concept of Dharma was hierarchical and did not contain scope for democratic citizenship

New framework for society had to be created Western values of equality, liberty, fraternity and mutual assistance

But without the exploitation and violence intrinsic to Western notion of the nation-state and capitalism

Aspects of swaraj

Varied meanings of freedom involved in the conception of swaraj.

Sudipta Kaviraj (2002 The ideas of freedom in modern India) - three different meanings. First, swaraj for individuals involves rule over oneself by 'bringing the senses under control'. Second, swaraj for the community encompasses 'collective freedom from want and indignity'. Third, swaraj for the nation entails freedom for India from 'European modernity as the ineluctable future of mankind'

Anthony Parel (2016 'Pax Gandhiana: The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.') identifies two complementary meanings in the concept of swaraj. First is 'political swaraj', which involves a 'sovereign state formed through the process of self-determination'. Second is 'self-discipline', which is about 'internal ordering of the passions of the senses by the mind'.

Parel (2000),

The novelty of the conception of swaraj lies in its capacity to reconcile negative freedom, rooted in Western intellectual traditions. Eg Marx – freedom from exploitation

And positive freedom, as rooted in classical Indian philosophy – spiritual freedom

Swaraj 'bridges the internal world of spiritual freedom and the external world of political and economic freedom'. In his words, 'spiritual capital accumulated' is 'invested in action in the fields of politics, economics and social reform'.

By doing so, swaraj reconciles spiritual freedom, which was primarily seen as asocial in classical Indian philosophical traditions, with the negative freedom of a Western intellectual tradition that involves gaining freedom from external constraints while being within a society. According to him, this gives 'originality' to swaraj in 'political philosophy' (Parel, 2016: 74)

Swaraj through non violence

The normative vision defines non-violence in an active sense of love, which involves protecting the self-rule of others while defending one's self-rule from external domination.

Non-violence encompasses selflessness and fearlessness, where the former entails the renunciation of self-interest, and the latter is understood as the courage to defend oneself from external impositions.



Capitalism and western modernity

Alternative to capitalism, the culture of waste and disgusting consumerism is voluntary simplicity or voluntary poverty

Western capitalism is evil even for the West

Modern political theory has two faces: one within Europe and one for the rest of the world; justify exploitation by civilizing mission

The British argued that India was primitive and not capable of governing itself; British values needed to civilize India – Hind Swaraj was also a critical response to such beliefs

Since 1930, the US has been waging wars with some part of the world or the other outside its soil and arm twisting poor nations into trade pacts though it maintains peace and equality within

Hind Swaraj

Not written as a monologue

It is meant to be a dialogue

But unlike ancient Indian texts of dialogue between a Master and Disciple, Hind Swaraj is a dialogue between reader and editor and is open ended

Swadeshi

In page 21 Anthony Parel (Ed.) Hind Swaraj, Gandhi mentions 'Swadeshi'

Literally it means things pertaining to one's own country

Inspired by the Irish political sovereignty movement of 1905 'Sinn Fein' (We ourselves)

As a national movement, it had many dimensions

Economic - boycott British goods, make your own – hence the Charkha

Educational level – create your own institutes

Swadeshi – not just what is produced in our country

It means 'reliance on ones own strength'