

SWADESHI MAHATMA GANDHI



SWARAJ

- 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, political and economic 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



CIVILIZATION

- Earlier people wore skins and used spears. British living in better houses today, wearing better clothes. Is that civilization?
- Bodily welfare = emblem of civilization?
- Embellish your body and carry pistols instead of spear is it more civilized?
- Instead of manual ploughing, if a man uses steam power and amasses great wealth
- Not needing to use your hands and feet but push buttons?
- Enslavement from physical compulsion to enslavement by money and luxuries of life
- Such a civilization is irreligious. According to the teachings of Mohammed the prophet, this will be called satanic; Hindus call it Black age or Kaliyug



WHAT IS TRUE CIVILIZATION?

- Civilization is that mode of acting that one follows the path of duty- Good conduct (Gujarati)
- Attain mastery over our mind and our passions is the way of knowing ourselves
- Industrial civilization has only increased our comfort through gadgets, nothing major has been achieved
- The constant search for comforts and their multiplication is an evil that plagues the modern civilization
- The British will themselves realize that this cannot continue
- 'Plain living and high thinking' should be our approach
- Indian civilization has nothing to learn from the British in this respect
- No civilization is perfect; problems of hierarchy and discrimination are defects of the civilization that must be corrected



RAILWAYS

- Introduced in 1853
- Railways have increased the frequency of famines and epidemics
- Irrigation more important than railway lines
- Walk, Bullock cart – yet good things done – railways did not unite India as projected
- Distance, travel and bodily scale – Gandhi was influenced by critics of the cult of speed like Thomas Taylor ' The fallacy of speed'
- Critique of the professions – lawyers and doctors



ITALY AND INDIA

- What is a nation? Is it its rulers or people?
- Revolutionary leaders like Giuseppe Mazzini (formed young Italy 1832)– great and good – but the path of violence and assassination to free ones own country is not acceptable
- What is the point replacing a tyrant from outside by one from within?
- Many Indian princes were tyrannical and crushed the poor and disprivileged
- We cannot fight the British with arms; they are splendid at that



ON VIOLENT PROTESTS AND ASSASSINATION

- No act of treachery can ever profit a nation; Even if the British are made to leave by violent overthrow, their place will be taken by murderers
- Is Englishman bad because he is English or because he colonized?
- India will not gain by rule of murderers, whether they be black or white!
- Passive resistance later Satyagraha – Soul force or truth force – requires more courage than violence
- Passive resistance -Weapon of the weak

- War begets war



LABOR AND SATYAGRAHA

- The *kisans* (*peasantry*) of Champaran were suffering in the plantations for a century.
- There were several violent revolts seeking redressal
- But the non violent protest brought together 20 lakh kisan and was successful
- It was non-violent till the very end and made the kisan politically conscious
- The secret lies in refusal to exploit them for political gains
- Ahmedabad labor union is a model – it is non-violent and simple
- Not part of party politics



MACHINERY

- It is the machinery of Manchester that ruined countless Indian weavers
- We wore mill made cloth from Manchester – yes it is cheaper but it threw millions out of employment
- Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization; it is a sin (later he modified this view)
- It allows wealth to be amassed by the mill –owners, whether British or Indian
- It would be mistake to assume that an Indian capitalist will be better than the American
- The wealthy Indians in fact, support the British



- Now that machinery has been established; we cannot remove them suddenly
- We have to protect thousands of poor unemployed to run their own looms in a parallel set up
- We have room in the country for both, mills and handlooms
- At this point Gandhi was not aware of the spinning wheel and that it is different from the loom.
- It was only later that he realized its significance in handloom industry and the Charkha became such a powerful symbol of Gandhi's movement



MACHINERY

- Doctors will confirm that people are healthier where artificial locomotion is not found
- Whether printing is good?
- This is one instance that it is like poison used to kill another poison
- Opposition to machinery is not the point
- What suits the country is the point- gigantic mills for cloth and huge bakeries for bread will destroy the family stove
- Penalize labor saving machines; encourage machine manufactures that can produce better ploughs for the farmer
- Machinery well used to help and ease human effort
- Present use – concentration of wealth



IS ECONOMIC PROGRESS REAL PROGRESS?

- Is material advancement adequate to qualify as progress?
- Real progress is moral progress
- Of course this does not mean we should live in grinding poverty
- We do need economists to come and tell us that every person needs to get food, clothing and shelter
- What is good for America and England need not be good for India
- We should not use machinery for producing things we have the capacity for.
- Machines make us slaves, we (humans) have to be independent and self supporting



MORAL CALIBRE

- The question is whether material advancement automatically means moral advancement
- Wealth for its own sake is not good
- Great thinkers and men have embraced voluntary poverty
- We have to show more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp or splendor, greater charity than love of self



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'
- Adopt technology selectively – only as extension of sensory organs only creative enhancement – like Singer's sewing machine



KHADI

- Gandhi says that by recommending Khadi he is not taking the country in the reverse direction
- Khadi symbolizes economic freedom and equality.
- It means whole sale swadeshi mind set – determination to find the necessities of life in India and through the labor and intellect of the villages
- The villages did produce many things for the city earlier until they were destroyed by the British imports
- The villages in India can also produce for the rest of the world
- Small scale household production versus factory production



VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

- True swadeshi – revive home industries – they are small scale – reflect creativeness of the ordinary people
- Avenue for the poor and unemployed – not asking people to quit remunerative occupations and come to the village
- Let the villagers produce – initially it will be costly and inferior quality, but they can be improved with training
- They can coexist with big industries
- 700000 villages in India – Dead machinery cannot be pitted against them
- Villagers can use modern tools if they are affordable and enabling
- Khadi will preserve the dignity of the village against exploitation by the city

DECLINE OF VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

- Shift to mill made flour, sugar and dairy – white foodstuffs -unhealthy- no nutrition
- Especially for the villager who does not have access to meat it causes further undernourishment
- Mill made things may be cheaper for the villager as a consumer but deprives their livelihood as producers
- Mill owners in the villages have caused unemployment and impoverishment
- Mechanization is bad for a populous country like India
- Villagers methods of production can be improved and corporatized through co-operatives
- All India spinners association – 5000 villages

THINGS OR PEOPLE?

- Whether khadi, unpolished rice and *gur* (*Old form of jaggery used before white sugar*) are valuable in themselves or for the sake of employment of the villagers?
- How to address the cost of Khadi over mill made things and their utility outside the village?
- Develop high degree of skill in village crafts
- Cultivate craft education
- Begin with yourself – consumption of khadi – replace toothbrush with neem twig, for instance.

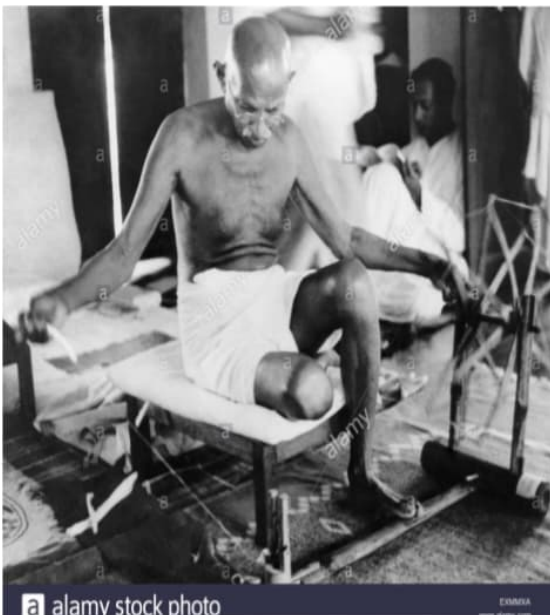
PATTERN OF STATE ASSISTANCE

- Separate ministry for khadi will be costly; department is enough
- Government should supply cotton and seeds wherever required,
- create financial loans for tools of manufacture,
- provide instructors, and
- buy surplus stocks
- Have village exhibitions
- If villages are taken care of India will overcome the poverty cycle



CHARKHA THE SPINNING WHEEL

- The spinning wheel is a simple mechanism – can be operated at home –easy to learn
- It can engage old and young and abolish idleness while increasing productivity
- It can be a supplementary source of income to rural families
- It provides immediate relief in times of scarcity and famine
- It allows for co-operation among people
- The Charkha was a symbol of Swadeshi because:
 - it had economic significance and,
 - also because it is a technology that does not violate the inherent integrity of nature



- The charkha is both a tool and a machine because for every revolution of the hand the spindle takes about 150 or more revolutions.
- Operated by human power multiplied by mechanically design



SWADESHI – NON- EXPLOITATIVE AND NON-VIOLENT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- Humble searcher of truths, knows his limitations, makes mistakes, admit that he makes mistakes and like a scientist making experiments about the verities of life
- Emphasized that craftsmen and weavers learn the science of spinning, and science of cotton and its varieties unlike the mill owner/worker
- Good spinning and weaving required high degree of mechanical and technical skill and concentration
- 'You cannot build a non-violence based on a factory civilization, but it can be done from self contained villages. In his view, the ideal of village that he has constructed eschews exploitation, as exploitation is the essence of violence



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Gandhi has been recognised as 'patron saint of the Indian environmental movement' (Guha, 1995: 47),
- Swaraj political ideas by Gandhi, Economic and environmental aspect by J.C.Kumarappa developmental vision –
- Moral political economy (MPE) framework of development as swaraj, which understands political economy as encompassed within moral philosophy.
- MPE while exploring the Anabaptist tradition of sixteenth-century to assert that economic activity is always informed by moral values
- Gandhi (1988: 1313) said, 'science is affected by the scientist's subjective values.'



CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

- Critique of parliament system
- Emphasis on civil society/social movement/civil disobedience to check the excesses of the state and foster democracy
- Aruna Roy inspired by this:
- Workers and Peasants Strength Union (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan; MKSS), an organization devoted to empowering workers and peasants and increasing the accountability of local governments.
- Right to information act
-



CRITIQUES

- Gandhi faced bitter criticism from his contemporaries who thought he was advocating obscurantism
- Babasaheb Ambedkar disagreed with the emphasis given to the village, which he saw as the hub of caste discrimination and untouchability
- Nehru, the PM of independent India thought that his vision for India like other Congressmen was based on modern science
- The Charkha was seen as an important as political symbol in the freedom movement, but not as a symbol of India's economic future
- Nehru's India was ready to embrace industrialization, but under the mixed economy approach – a combination of capitalism and socialism – public sector companies



IS SWADESHI ANTISCIENCE?

- No : Hind Swaraj is an early text Gandhi's later writings invoke science
- He was critical of material progress that was divorced from moral progress.
- He liked scientific experimentation, but not its vivisectionism
- In his view a scientist should not cater to the market or state, but to the people
- Swadeshi - not against industry, but against factory based mass production; not suitable to India but also not good for the world.
- Economic self reliance (Swadeshi) of Indian society could be achieved only if the poor and unemployed are well established as producers.
- Small scale industry, craft education and technical innovation that is not expensive –these were essential to self reliance



SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

1. Exploring Gandhian Science: A Case study of the Khadi Movement. IITD 2001

- This thesis is a sociological study of science in the khadi movement,
- Explicating the Gandhian notion of the experiment – Prayog – experiment
- 'Knowledge in civil society' portal

2. Development as Swaraj (self-rule) and the quest for non-violent social order: A case study of the Khadi sector in Karnataka, India

SUBMITTED FOR DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
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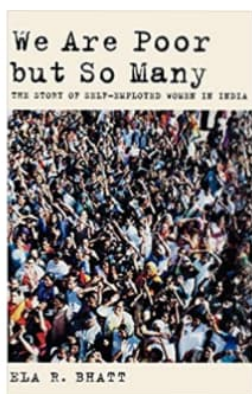
Janapada Khadi in Karnataka town



IMPACT OF GANDHIAN SWADESHI

- J.C.Kumarappa – (1892-1960) Economist - educated in London- accepted Gandhian concept.
- Travelled to China, E.Europe and Japan to study their economic systems – served in the planning commission
- Promoted ‘economy of permanence’ (today it is called sustainability)- opposed big dams – considered to be the father of Indian environmentalism by Ramachandra Guha
- The Bhoodan movement of 1951 (Movement for gifting land) was also inspired by Gandhi’s principle that the rich and landed should be persuaded to donate their lands to the poor and landless

SEWA (SELF EMPLOYED WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION)



- SEWA is one of the best case studies of the idea of Swadeshi
- Swadeshi as an arena of economic activity - not controlled by the market or state
- Arena of civil society - formed by the poor for themselves
- Being poor, women and self employed – multiple vulnerabilities

ELA BHAT

- Started by Ela Bhatt a lawyer from Gujarat deeply influenced by Gandhian principles – simplicity
- She was initially with the TLA (Textile Labour Association).
- TLA was started in 1921 by Anusuya Ben and Gandhi
- But Ela Bhatt found that TLA was oblivious to the plight of women/wives of laborers who had to run the family after a lockdown in 1968
- Women received lesser pay than men, labor from Dalit communities were excluded by those from the middling groups

WHO ARE THE SELF EMPLOYED?

- Starts a separate union for poor women such as rag pickers, vendors, mid wives, embroiders, bidi (Indian cigarette) rollers and crafts women
- Jobs without definition, no labor laws apply, hard work
- 'I have no work, but the grind of work is killing me' said a tiny shrunken women – lifetime of hard labor and meager earnings
- Referred to as unorganized, marginal, peripheral etc. Marginal to what?
- Women here - producer-vendors – also contributing to the national economy but are isolated and invisible
- Ela Bhatt calls them SELF-EMPLOYED women
- Economy outside of law (informal economy) – Bhatt found that legal knowledge not enough



SPLIT FROM TLA

- In 1972 SEWA is registered. 1974 Joined by Oxford economist Devaki Jain
- Ela Bhatt Travels to Europe for labor conferences – comes back with feminist consciousness – women's rights ascendant in Europe – demanding pay for housework
- In 1981 riots in Ahmedabad – the TLA haven of middle-caste labor maintains silence over attack on Dalits
- TLA asks SEWA to leave; does not care for women workers
- 1981: SEWA -becomes an independent unionist co-operative with 4900 members
- By 2001 largest primary union in the country 700000 members
- Joined by Renana Jhabvala who had degree in Math from Yale and Economics from Harvard



UNION CUM CO-OPERATIVE

- 2 contrary functions
 - Union
 - Co-operative
- Multiple jobs – some laboring for others, vending and home based production of kites, quilts etc – categories are restricting
- Collective bargaining and home based production



NOT AGAINST ANYBODY BUT FOR THEMSELVES

- Women come together not against anybody but for themselves – (in contrast to the Marxist idea of the trade union of labor in the formal industry against the owner)
- Poorest poor – those outside formal labor sector and the wives of jobless men – their union has to function as a cooperative; they have no one to fight against - the whole system is above them
- Most difficult task – removing conceptual blocks -Registrar of trade unions



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF SEWA

- Each trade has a representative – council of representatives
- The council elects 25 executive members – meet once a month
- Top body of decision makers elected from executive body every 3 years
- Men sought to join, but the women firmly refused
 - They feel inhibited, men dominate and fight
 - Wanted to keep their earnings private
- All women's organization



- Rag pickers – sub economy around scrap from textile mills – quilts – self appointed recycling agents -
- Vendors – stand up for themselves - police, municipal officials – raids and bribes cycle – concept of urban space and land valuation – vendors significant role in economy



BANKING

- Private lenders high interest- banking system in India nationalized in 1969
- it was difficult for banks to think of lending to anyone without some form of collateral, and the absence of assets among the working poor was a problem.
- Illiteracy
- Distrust of the poor by bank officials and condescension toward their economic activities.
- No bank no savings – money gets spent



SEWA BANK

- At a SEWA members' meeting at Naranghat in December 1973, Chandaben, a used garment dealer from Poori Bazar, asked me, "Ben, why can't we have our own bank?" "Because we have no money," I replied patiently. "You need a very large amount of capital to start a bank!" "Well, **we may be poor, but we are so many**," Chandaben replied. I was taken aback! She had such faith in our group's ability that she thought we could move mountains! Chandaben's words started everyone at the meeting thinking, "Why ever not? We have to have our own bank!" The more we dreamed aloud, the more real the idea appeared. It was worth investigating



- The women were all economically active and their economic contribution was crucial to the family's survival.
- We set out to form a bank of our own in 1974. Bank shares were 10 rupees each. Within six months, the initial share capital of 71,320 rupees was collected from 6,287 members. Shri Mahila SEWA Sahakari Bank Ltd. or the SEWA Women's Cooperative Bank was established on May 20, 1974. We had found the capital, but the Registrar of Cooperatives would not register our bank.



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- The women completely shattered the myth that the poor are not bankable. The illiterate, the slum dwellers, and the self-employed not only proved themselves creditworthy, but they turned their bank into a viable, profitable, financial venture, without the aid of any subsidy.
- Increase deposits – 1 re when you pass by the bank – like offering in a temple
- By the end of 1976, SEWA Bank had 11,038 member-depositors, a working capital of 1,198,872 rupees, and a profit of 21,623 rupees, which yielded a 9-percent dividend for the 6,945 shareholders
- An elected governing board of twenty-five trade-wise representatives of the member-customers governs the bank
- Bank sathis to explain banking to poor women – bank went to the people – established saving pattern



BANK OF, BY AND FOR LABORERS

- Assessing credit worthiness of women – SEWA went beyond conventional parameters – women tend to buy gold from savings – spend on marriages lavishly – SEWA couldn't change that
- The women who constitute SEWA Bank are also the women for whom the Bank was constituted. So in a sense, there is no "they" or "we"; lines between owners, management, and clients are quite blurred. Those who demand the service and those who supply the service are inherently the same critical mass of women. In sum, SEWA Bank grows out of the needs of working-class women from the informal, self-employed sector, where their needs are not met by the country's banking services at large – SEWA bank only bank of its kind
- 1986 savings exceeded 1 crore

