



Hind Swaraj of Mahatma Gandhi: A Philosophical Portrayal of Indian Enslavement to Western Colonialism

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Abstract

This paper brings out the important issues connected with the Gandhian philosophy of Hind Swaraj. Hind Swaraj is a book penned by Mahatma Gandhi is considered as a critical document of 20th century. It teaches the gospel of love in place of that of hatred. It projected violence can be replaced with self-sacrifice. It was a philosophy which pits soul force against brute force. This Gandhian ideal holds good for all time because enslavement to western materialism was the prime cause behind the loss of Indian Independence. This book is considered special not because it created a great impact in India not because it was penned by Mahatma Gandhi, but because of the simplicity it forayed in depicting Indian subservience to the British imperialism .This article examines the key factors behind the penning of this book by Mahatma Gandhi & it spotlights the relevance of this ideology in the present Liberalization context.

Key words: Hind Swaraj, imperialism, materialism western colonialism

"In effect it means this: that we want English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English. And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englistan. This is not the Swaraj that I want."(M. K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj, Chap. IV)

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi wrote the book Hind Swaraj on board the ship **SS KILDONANCASTLE** .It was written between November 13th to November 22 during 1909 He was travelling from London to South Africa. It was written in Gujarati language. It was banned in India by the British administrators later it was translated to by himself to English . But this edition was not banned. This appeared as a regular column in Indian

opinion a newspaper edited by Mahatma Gandhi. It was 100 pages long & contained 20 chapters

The Book

This book is considered special not because it created a great impact in India not because it was penned by Mahatma Gandhi, but because of the simplicity it forayed in depicting Indian subservience to the British overlords. It is written in the form of a dialogue between the editor



& the reader as in aUpanishadic treatise. (M. K. Gandhi, Young India, December 8, 1920, p.886 (Young India, August 6, 1925, p. 276 and Harijan, March 25, 1939, p.64.)

Here the reader is the Indian citizen voicing the severe condemnation received at British hands. The fore word was called as a word of explanation. Mahatma experiments of passive resistance in South Africa which were helpful in portraying this book. In This book he initiated what he himself described as "a severe condemnation of 'modern civilization" (M. K. Gandhi, Young India, December 8, 1920, p.886 (Young India, August 6, 1925, p. 276 and Harijan, March 25, 1939, p.64.)

By Swaraj, he meant freedom and self-rule which should be practiced at three levels –

1. In case of individual Swaraj, it is self-control or Swaraj of the self.
2. In case of the country, it is the freedom of India from the British clutch, and
3. In case of community level, it is Grain Swaraj or freedom of village.

The Importance

Mahatma Gandhi thought of Hind Swaraja is a book that could be "put into the hands of a child. It teaches the gospel of love in place of that of hate. It replaces violence with self-sacrifice. It pits soul

force against brute force" (Hind Swaraj p. 16). He was impressed by the principles of Leo Tolstoy of winning violence through love & passive resistance. Mahatma Gandhi said the if Indians adopted the doctrine of love as an active part of the politics Swaraj would descend immediately. ("A Word of Explanation" in Young India (January 1921). Mahatma argued that Indian Independence was possible only through passive resistance. There is harm in exercise of brute force but passive resistance always supports the key issue he said. (M. K. Gandhi, Young India, December 8, 1920, p.886 (Young India, August 6, 1925, p. 276 and Harijan, March 25, 1939, p.64.)

He appealed to people to have marginal wants

1. limitations to human wants,
2. limitations on consumption patterns,
3. limitations on utilization demands,
4. limitations on addiction on electronic devices,
5. limitations on un called for desires
6. limitations to unnecessary requirements

"God set a limit to man's locomotive ambition in the construction of his body. Man immediately proceeded to discover means of overriding the limit. God gifted man with intellect that he might know his Maker. Man abused it so that he might forget his maker. I am so constructed that I can only serve my



immediate neighbors, but in my conceit I pretend to have discovered that I must with my body serve <http://www.mkgandhi-sarvodaya.org/hindswaraj.htm> - to every individual in the Universe." [M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, Chap. X]

About Spiritual Freedom

In his work, Mahatma it is apparent that spiritual freedom is the foundation upon which political freedom is based. It is this basic premise that Mahatma Gandhi brings out in *Hind Swaraj*. The idea of being able to speak to the Indian people, as a nation or a group that does not exist as servants to the British, is another striking element of Mahatma Gandhi's writing that makes it a distinct work of the Independence Movement. (M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, December 8, 1920, p.886 (*Young India*, August 6, 1925, p. 276 and *Harijan*, March 25, 1939, p.64.)

But Mahatma Gandhi remained clearly bound to the view that India had been grounded into submission not so much by the British as by the attraction towards modern civilization by Indians. According to Mahatma it is the glitter of the modern world that seduced India and rendered it captive. As he wrote, in a chapter entitled "Why was India Lost?", "The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them" (M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, Chap. VII & VIII p. 38). Mahatma presents with idealized version of Indian culture Technology was a condensed humanism & was always precarious. Mahatma Gandhi advised people to test conviction

with reason. Because only when reason is mixed with faith people could live in pristine bliss.

About Parasitic Professionals

In *Hind Swaraj*, Mahatma Gandhi launched into a ferocious critique of the "parasitic" professionals who staff modern society, particularly doctors, engineers, lawyers, and the like. (Parel, Anthony. *Hind Swaraj and other writings of M. K. Gandhi*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1997 pp 22-67)

He opined sometimes "quacks are better than highly qualified doctors"; as for doctors trained in modern, allopathic medicine, Mahatma Gandhi observed that "for the sake of a mistaken care of the human body, they kill annually thousands of animals. They practice vivisection" (pp. 59). Lawyers existed to "advance quarrels instead of repressing them" (p. 55).

Mahatma Gandhi praised western civilization for its strength such as

1. Critical spirit control over nature
2. Organizational capacity,
3. Management of resources,
4. Time bound execution,
5. Sincerity of implementation etc.

But he warned Indians to put forth their affluent heritage which preached self reliance & self confidence. He was against to any kind of subservience because it would deny the power of reason. (M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, December 8, 1920, p.886 (*Young India*, August 6, 1925, p. 276 and *Harijan*, March 25, 1939, p.64.)



Hind Swaraj thus teaches the gospel of love in place of that of hatred. It projected violence can be replaced with self-sacrifice. It was a philosophy which pits soul force against brute force. This Gandhian ideal holds good for all time because enslavement to western materialism was the prime cause behind the loss of Indian Independence. (Parel, Anthony. Hind Swaraj and other writings of M. K. Gandhi. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1997 pp 22-27)

Conclusion

The book is considered special not because it created a great impact in India not because it was penned by Mahatma Gandhi, but because of the simplicity it conveyed in portraying Indian enslavement to the British colonialism. Hind Swaraj is great because it determines that there must be some restrictions to human wants, his consumption patterns, Utilization demands, addiction on electronic devices, his un called for desires & requirements. It remains an endearing book even after several criticisms. It is a foundational text in interpreting the man & his mission. Mahatma interpreted civilization as a moral enterprise. Mahatma repeatedly spoke against colonial imperialism, industrial capitalism, and rationalist materialism though it is not a rejection of liberalized contribution to modernity. He has tried to reinterpret the traditional support India was portraying as against western

Civilization. The loss & recovery of self under colonialism we would always be enslaved, He subverted the colonial enterprise at its core. He interpreted capitalism as a dynamic force behind colonial imperialism. Mahatma presents us with idealized version of Indian culture Technology was a truncated humanism & was always dangerous. Mahatma wanted to test faith with reason.

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