Chapter – IV

Gandhi’s Concept of Swaraj

Mahatma Gandhi was a man of extra-ordinary courage, determination and perseverance. He was a great Karmayogin and his whole life was devoted to the supremacy of the moral law – the law of truth and love. He left an indelible impact on the social, economic and political spheres. He was regarded as a great revolutionary, who was aware of the significance of freedom to all the enslaved people in the world. He wrote various major works like, Hind Swaraj, The Autobiography, History of Satyagraha in South Africa, Commentaries on the Gita in Gujarati. Of these works, he translated Hind Swaraj in English.

The concept of swaraj has received a very prominent place in Gandhi’s spiritual, political, social and economic ideas and has been expressed in his writings and speeches. He tried to re-interpret age old meaning of swaraj in accordance with the requirement of his time, and used the word, swaraj, to revive the sleeping spirit of Indian people.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, the word swaraj was a Vedic word which meant self-rule or the rule which self exercises over itself. To quote him, “The word Swaraj is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint.”\(^1\) It was the right ordering of the various powers of the self

and embodied the quest for self-improvement. Explaining the meaning of Swaraj he said, “The root meaning of Swaraj is self-rule. “Swaraj” may, therefore, be rendered as disciplined rule from within.”

According to Gandhi, man could not rule over himself without conquering the lust within him. Rule over all without rule over oneself was deceptive and disappointing. The great mission in life could not be fulfilled without the rule over the self.

Gandhi regarded individual as a centre of power. He stated that swaraj in the individual combined the cosmic principles with one's individual actions. He further explained that Swaraj means 'learning to rule over oneself' or attaining the ability of self-rule. One who had attained such ability was regarded to be free or to have attained freedom.

Gandhi considered individual as a spiritual being, endowed with a divine mission to fulfill. He considered individual as the soul and according to him, his true nature was freedom, which was self-realisation or realisation of God. He said that individual who had realised his freedom might be said to had attained his swaraj or self-government which was synonymous with Moksha or salvation. According to Gandhi, the highest goal in life was to

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2 Jag Parvesh Chander, ed., Teaching of Mahatma Gandhi (Lahore: The Indian Printing Works, Kacheri Road, n.d.), p. 543.
attain moksha, to become one with or dissolve oneself into the cosmic spirit. Moksha involved the complementary processes of dissolving the self by eliminating desires and dissolving the other by attaining total identification with all creation. He considered it as a process of self-conversion and mental revolution.

According to him, self-realisation meant discovery of and total identification with God, that is, Truth. He believed in the possibility of an ultimate realisation of the absolute. For him, the consummation of men's striving is his total identification with God, this is self-realisation for Gandhi. Gandhi held that the supreme purpose of human life was spiritual self-realisation which he equated with the pursuit of God or Truth. It was because he identified spiritual self-realisation with the pursuit of Truth that he devoted his entire life to the search after Truth.

Gandhi used swaraj as a purity concept. It stood for the purity of body, mind and soul taken together. According to him, the spirit or the higher self "rules" the lower self or the empirical ego. The spirit exerts its influence on the empirical ego, on emotions, mind and intelligence. He asserted that self-rule was a self-achieved state of affairs, not something

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granted by others. It (self-rule) was a self-transformative activity. In other words, swaraj was about “the constantly confirmed consciousness of being in charge of one’s destiny, not just about liberty but about power.”

Swaraj, in Gandhian formulation, entails, ‘a disciplined rule from within’. Defining swaraj as ‘self-conversion’ and ‘mental revolution’ to experience ‘inner freedom’, he argued that “Swaraj is a state of mind to be experienced by us [and it] consists in our efforts to win it.”

Swaraj as self-rule also meant inner freedom or positive freedom. It was the rule of the self by the Self. It was the rule of the mind over itself and the passions – the passions of greed and aggression, in particular. Self-rule enables one to pursue artha and kama within the bounds of dharma.

Gandhi believed that the task in life should be to attain deeper and deeper levels of self-knowledge, which became possible when the mind and the senses are properly disciplined. Thus swaraj was seen as a state of affairs in which all factors of the human personality were brought under proper discipline – the mind ruling the senses, the soul ruling the mind and the self ruling the soul. According to him, it must be started with training

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9 Ibid.
of body in the right direction, which had to be followed by the training of mind. Without a disciplined mind the senses could not be brought under control nor could the soul proceed freely into its path of moral progress. Gandhi regarded moral development as a part of the life process. He declined to judge the worth of persons on the basis of what they were presently and other various factors. He stressed on what people could voluntarily become.

For Gandhi, swaraj also referred to a state of affairs in which individuals were morally in control of themselves. They did what was right, resolved their differences and conflicts and dispensed with external coercion. For Gandhi swaraj thus presupposed self-discipline, self restraint, a sense of mutual responsibility, the disposition neither to dominate nor be dominated by others and a sense of dharma. Gandhi regarded truth, non-violence, Brahmacharya, non-possession, non-stealing, fearlessness, removal of untouchability, commitment to bread labour, faith in equality of religions and practice of swadeshi as pillars of personal swaraj. He firmly believed in the inner consciousness or sovereignty of the soul and rejected submission to any law if it conflicted with the moral stature of a man. He added, “Real swarajya consists in restraint. He alone is capable of this who leads a moral life, does not cheat anyone, does not forsake truth and does his duty to his

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parents, his wife, his children, his servant and his neighbour. Such a man will enjoy swarajya wherever he may happen to live.\textsuperscript{13}

Gandhi tried to preserve and revitalize the best in the ancient tradition so as to bring it into line with modern sensibilities. He was more inclined to adopt good virtues of great Indian civilization for the moral development of human beings. He outrightly rejected the adoption of western civilization which was teaching mad race for materialism without fulfilling moral objectives of human beings. To quote him, “The tendency of the Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western civilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is godless, the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so believing, it behoves every lover of India to cling to the old Indian civilization even as a child clings to the mother's breast.”\textsuperscript{14}

Similarly, a right form of civilization, Gandhi argued in \textit{Hind Swaraj}, “is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So


doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization means “good conduct”.¹⁵

Thus according to Gandhi, for realising the self, the first essential thing was to cultivate a strong moral sense. While morality meant the acquisition of virtues, acquisition of virtues was not the goal for Gandhi, it was only a beginning of the great spiritual adventure of self-realisation through selfless service.

Gandhi reminded his colleagues that swaraj will not drop from the cloud and that it would be the fruit of patience, perseverance, ceaseless toil, courage and intelligent appreciation of the environment.¹⁶ According to him, swaraj was a state of mind to be experienced by oneself. One had to win it by one’s own strength. To quote him, “It is Swaraj when we learn to rule ourselves. It is, therefore, in the palm of our hands. Do not consider this Swaraj to be like a dream. There is no idea of sitting still. The Swaraj that I wish to picture is such that, after we have once realised it, we shall endeavour to the end of our life-time to persuade others to do likewise. But such Swaraj has to be experienced, by each one for himself. One drowning

man will never save another. Slaves ourselves, it would be a mere pretension to think of freeing others.”

Gandhi staunchly believed that swaraj could be obtained by struggle and suffering and asserted that only hard-work could lead to the attainment of the swaraj. However, he left the responsibility to find the path to attain swaraj wholly on the individual. He provided some broad guidelines which coincided with the basic human urge to know one's own soul and the state of living in such a knowing mode.

However to Gandhi swaraj did not only imply inner freedom – spiritual and moral freedom – it also implied outward freedom. He related inner swaraj or spiritual connotation of swaraj with external swaraj. According to him, the 'self' at every stage is to be understood in terms of its origin, destiny and the relationship with other things, one who attains such knowledge attains the mental status of equanimity (sthitapragña steady mind or moksha), self-control/restraint and thus self-rule. Such persons are known as free or liberated persons or jnani.

Gandhi has tried to relate religion with politics. According to him, both were complementary to each-other. The idea behind it was to purify politics through religious values or spiritualism. In fact, religion meant a

17 M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj or Indian Home-rule, p. 94.
spiritual commitment which was total but intensely personal. He believed 
in the fundamental unity of life, and rejected the distinction between public 
and private, secular and sacred.

Gandhi’s statements about swaraj or self-rule and freedom are equally 
applicable to individuals and to groups. He repeatedly asserted the 
connection between the notions of individual and collective self-rule and 
especially between individual and national swaraj. He said, “A sannyāsin, 
therefore, to be true to his creed of renunciation, must care for swaraj not for 
its sake but for the sake of others.”\(^\text{20}\) Similarly he said, “The outward 
freedom that we shall obtain will be in exact proportion to the inward 
freedom to which we may have grown at a given moment. And if this is 
correct view of freedom, our chief energy must be concentrated upon 
achieving reform from within.”\(^\text{21}\)

Gandhi talked about the political connotation of Swaraj. He accepted 
the truth of the famous mantras given by Tilak that swaraj was the 
birthright of Indians. He who had begun his political career in 1893 as a 
believer in the goodness and justice of the British empire and who clung to 
that belief till 1919, was transformed into a defiant champion of swaraj in 
1920 and of purna swaraj in 1929. In 1928, he had supported Motilal Nehru 
in the demand only of dominion status, but in 1929 he sided with the radical

\(^{20}\) Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi’s Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination* 

\(^{21}\) B.S. Anjaneyule, ‘Gandhi’s ‘Hind Swaraj’ – Swaraj, The Swadeshi Way’, *The 
Indian Journal of Political Science*, p. 36.
younger element in Congress who wanted it to accept complete independence as its goal. Swaraj or political freedom in the sense of national independence of the country from the iron chains of British imperialism became the passion of his soul.

Highlighting the political connotation of *swaraj* Gandhi said that it was the state in which people could maintain their separate existence without the presence of the English. To quote him, "Swaraj means a state such that we can maintain our separate existence without the presence of the English. If it is to be partnership, it must be partnership at will. There can be no swaraj without our feeling and being the equals of Englishmen. Today we feel that we are dependent upon them for our internal and external security, for an armed peace between the Hindus and the Musalmans, for our education and for the supply of daily wants, nay, even for the settlement of our religious squabbles."²²

According to Gandhi, *swaraj* was the complete freedom from the alien yoke in every sense of the term. He believed that it was impossible for an alien government to understand the problems of its native people. He asked Britishers to leave the people of India on their own conditions. In his historic speech at the All India Congress Committee in August 1942, Gandhi said, "I want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn... Today they (the

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masses) have no touch of life left. It has been crushed out of them. If luster is to be put into their eyes, freedom has to come not tomorrow but today."  

Gandhi blamed the Britishers for the pathetic situation of the Indian people. He considered them responsible for all types of problems and oppressions on the general masses. According to him, the self-rule could not be replaced by good-rule. To quote him, "To get swaraj then is to get rid of our helplessness. The problem is no doubt, stupendous even as it was for the fabled lion who, having been brought up in the company of goats, found it impossible to feel that he was a lion... For me the only training in swaraj we need is the ability to defend ourselves against the whole world and to live our natural life in perfect freedom even though it may be full of defects. Good government is no substitute for self-government."  

In an article entitled, "tampering with loyalty" he said very categorically that it was the dharma of Indians to spread dissatisfaction against British rule and to warn foreign power that their suppression and domination would destroy themselves only.

Gandhi believed that national swaraj could be attained by the same means which were essential for attaining individual swaraj. He had related the method of attaining individual swaraj with national swaraj and considered them complementary to each-other. To quote him, "Self-

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government depends entirely upon our internal strength, upon our ability to fight against the heaviest odds... that political self-government, that is, self-government for a large number of men and women, is no better than individual self-government, and, therefore, it is to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule."  

As early as 1909, Gandhi had emphasized the central role of self-discipline to attain *swaraj* and home-rule. According to him, real home-rule was self-rule or self-control. Thus he who had sacrificed his all for Swaraj had certainly attained it for himself.  

According to Gandhi, the national *swaraj* would be real if the masses developed the capacity to resist the authority when it was abused. He stressed the need of discipline, self-help, self-sacrifice and courage for the attainment of *Swaraj*. To quote him, "All this means discipline, self-denial, self-sacrifice, organizing ability, confidence and courage. If we show this in one year among the classes that today count, and make public opinion, we certainly gain swaraj within one year. If I am told that even we who lead have not these qualities in us, there certainly will never be swaraj for India, 

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but then we shall have no right to blame the English for what they are doing. Our salvation and its time are solely dependent upon us.”

Gandhi appreciated the strength and power of the Britishers, their industrious nature and intelligence. He asked Indians to have that kind of strength and calibre in themselves for attaining swaraj. To quote him, “We desire freedom from the bondage of foreign rule. The question however, is how can we make this rule disappear. We have to search for the cause as to why such a small country rules over us. Their number is small but how industrious and capable they are! They can do hard and intelligent work and that is the secret of their power and authority. If true Swaraj is to be obtained, we will also have to work strenuously.”

Gandhi regarded swaraj essential for solving all problems of the Indian people. He believed that under self-rule Indians would enjoy all those rights and advantages which were enjoyed by Britishers under their own rule and he stressed that Indians would be able to get what they deserved.

Gandhi submitted that swaraj was an all-satisfying goal for all time. It was infinitely greater than and included independence. It was a vital word and had been sanctified by the noble sacrifices of thousands of Indians. It was a word which, if it had not penetrated the remotest corner of India, had

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at least got the largest currency of any similar word. Gandhi did not regard
in independence as his ultimate goal. He wanted India to come to her own
and that state could not be better defined by any single word than 'Swaraj'.
Its content would vary with the action that the nation was able to put forth
at a given moment. India's coming to her own would mean every nation
doing likewise. He said, "My ambition is much higher than independence.
Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races
of the earth from the crushing heels of Western exploitation in which
England is the greatest partner. If India converts, as it can convert,
Englishmen, it can become the predominant partner in a world
commonwealth of which England can have the privilege of becoming a
partner if she chooses. India has the right, if she only knew, of becoming the
predominant partner by reason of her numbers, geographical position and
culture inherited for ages."\(^{29}\)

To Gandhi, *Swaraj* did not mean merely the withdrawal of British
rule. It was not only the absence of alien bondage. Political *swaraj* in the
sense of transfer of power from one set of rulers to another set did not satisfy
him. He said, "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

\(^{29}\) Rudrangshu Mukherjee, ed., *The Penguin Gandhi Reader* (New Delhi:
desire to exchange ‘king log for king stork’. Hence for me the movement of 
swaraj is a movement of self-purification.”

So, swaraj was not necessarily advocated against the foreign rule. He 
argued that one might rule oneself and yet one might not have swaraj. Even 
when one’s own brothers were ruling oneself, one might, not have swaraj and 
might have swaraj under foreign rule. Gandhi was opposed to all types of 
oppressions. He said that if the national government would become 
oppressive, it’s tyranny would be worse than that of the tyranny of the 
handful of Englishmen who formed the bureaucracy.

According to Gandhi, patriotism did not mean that people should be 
crushed under the heels of the Indian princes, if only the English retire. He 
stressed that tyranny of the Indian princes should be resisted as much as 
that of the English. By patriotism he also meant the welfare of the whole 
people. He asserted that if he would be getting that at hands of the English, 
he would accept their rule happily.

Mahatma Gandhi argued that in swaraj there would be complete 
freedom to it’s citizen to make choice both of good and evil. There would be 
no dictation from an irresponsible, insolvent and godless government and 
bureaucracy. As he said, “mere withdrawal of the English is not 
independence. It means the consciousness in the average villager that he is

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the maker of his own destiny, [that] he is his own legislator through his own representative.”

Gandhi believed that each nation should have its own system of government in keeping with its own conditions in which there would be the rule of common masses. The key point of his concept of swaraj was that power must belong to the people. He aimed at a democratic state based on moral authority. He insisted that democracy would be an impossible thing until the power was shared by all and it was not a state in which people acted like sheep. Gandhi was impressed by Abraham Lincoln's concept of democracy as 'a Government of the people, by the people for the people'. He made this definition the soul of his own concept of swaraj and accepted such a system of government at all levels of human governance, from the local to the national and even the international. It was this definition of Lincoln which was used by Gandhi as an argument to tell the rulers of the apartheid-ridden South Africa that by democracy Lincoln never meant 'Government of the white, by the white, for the white'. He had never conceived it as a Whiteman's democracy.

Gandhi argued that under democracy individual liberty of opinion and action would be jealously guarded. He stressed that a democrat must be utterly selfless and must think not in terms of self or party but only of

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31 Bidyut Chakrabarty, Social and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi, p. 37.
32 Ram Rattan and Ruchi Tyagi, Indian Political Thought (Noida: Mayoor Paperback, 1999), p. 221.
democracy. He expected a healthy and honest difference of opinion in democracy. To quote him, “Difference of opinion should never mean hostility. If they, did, my wife and I should be sworn enemies of one another. I do not know two persons in the world who had no difference of opinion, and as I am a follower of the Gita, I have always attempted to regard those who differ from me with the same affection as I have for my nearest and dearest.”

Gandhi tried to give a mass or democratic orientation to the concept of swaraj. As he perceived that the government of the country must be based on the consent of the majority of the people which should be ascertained through the adult suffrage. The people who elect such swaraj government should have contributed manual labour to the state. To quote him, “By Swaraj I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or 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.”

Gandhi accepted parliamentary form of government as the immediate goal of his conception of Swaraj. To quote him, “My swaraj is the Parliamentary government of India in the modern sense of the term for the

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34 M.K. Gandhi, Village Swaraj, p. 3.
It may be presumed that as the tallest leader of the nation he supported parliamentary swaraj as the immediate political objective, but as an ideal to strive for, he pinned his faith in 'Hind Swaraj', rule of all the people, or rule of justice as he called it. There was certainly a gulf between India of his dream and the immediate objective of the nation.

This gulf was not of his making, but it was in the given, concrete situation of India. His keen sense of realism found its expression in a letter he wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru as early as 1 April, 1928, “I am quite of your opinion that some day we shall have to start an intensive movement without the rich people and without the vocal educated class. But that time is not yet.”

However, parliamentary procedure was good only where its representatives were willing to conform to the will of the people. Highlighting the functions of the legislatures, Gandhi maintained that the legislatures of the present were different from the old. According to him, legislatures should not be destroyed, on the other hand, the system to which they were created to work should be destroyed. In 1946, he wrote in Harijan that legislatures could be useful if they carried out the popular will in general to the benefit of the masses. However, he felt that if entry into the


legislature became a matter of the personal ambition rather than a service of the masses, its value will be reduced. He argued:

we have long been accustomed to think that power comes only through legislative assemblies. I have regarded this belief as a grave error brought about by inertia or hypnotism. A superficial study of British history has made us think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. The truth is that power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representatives. The parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people. It has been my effort for the last twenty one years to convince the people of this simple truth.

Undoubtedly, his corporate activity was devoted to the attainment of parliamentary Swaraj in accordance with the wishes of the people of India.

But Gandhi was alive to the basic malady of parliamentary democracies. He believed that it was not independent in taking its decisions as it had to work under the pressure and compulsions of different groups and individuals inside and outside the Parliament. He was also afraid of the dictatorship or monopoly of the Cabinet. He was also critical of the selfish and hypocritical nature of the members who primarily kept in view their own interests alone. Further, he also doubted the finality of the decisions of parliament as these were changed frequently without any logic.

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Besides, he was sceptical about its suitability to the conditions in India where the overwhelming majority of the people were living in the villages. As they did not have the good knowledge of the working procedure of parliamentary form of government.

Moreover, Gandhi's *swaraj* was not to be based on the rule of majority in each and every detail of life. To quote him, "Let us not push the mandate theory to ridiculous extremes and become slaves to resolutions of majorities... Swaraj will be an absurdity if individuals have to surrender their judgement to majority." 

Criticising tyranny of majority he stressed that one could withstand the atrocities committed by one individual as such, but it was difficult to cope with the tyranny perpetrated upon a people in the name of the people. In this regard he said, "I do not believe in the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number. It means in it's nakedness that in order to achieve the supposed good of 51 percent the interest of 49 percent may be, or rather, should be sacrificed. It is a heartless doctrine and has done harm to humanity. The only real, dignified, human doctrine is the greatest good of all." Gandhi disagreed with Bentham's doctrine of 'the greatest happiness

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of the greatest number'. He considered it unethical because if the state accepted this principle as it's ideal, it would be serving the interest of the majority at the cost of minority.

Basically Gandhi wanted the rule of majority only to the extent it could be regarded as an expression of the collective social will. He believed that there were certain fundamental rights which must be kept beyond the control of majority, since they were the bases of the existence of individual freedom without which no form of democratic government could exist. For example, Gandhi believed that in matters of conscience the 'Law of Majority has no place'.

Gandhi’s Swaraj was not to be based on the rule of majority in each and every detail of life. On the other hand it was to be a participatory democracy. This involved a democratic structure of the government in which an individual enjoyed maximum freedom of thought, expression and participated in decision-making and decision-implementation processes. Similarly, the people were fully competent to retain political power in their hands to reduce the interference of government as minimum as possible and to establish self-government to avoid coercive control. Gandhi sought to build up a democratic structure from below, the self government (the real Swaraj) by awakening into the masses a sense of their power and dignity.

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43 Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XVIII (Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1965), p. 113
He reminded the people that they constituted the real power of the nation, they were the real masters of their own affairs. To quote him, “Swaraj involved not just the periodic accountability of government but the daily exercise of popular power, not just the enjoyment of civil and political rights but the constantly confirmed consciousness of being in charge of one’s destiny, not just liberty but power.”

In the political sphere, it was the idea of participation by the whole community in the political process. It based political authority on the will of individuals who by a process of cooperation make decisions that were binding on all. Gandhi considered that citizens had a duty to decide to whom they should give their loyalty and support and under what conditions. Their self-respect and dignity required that their loyalty should not be unconditional or taken for granted. When a law was just, they had a ‘sacred duty’ to give it their ‘willing and spontaneous obedience’, if it was unjust or morally unacceptable, they had the opposite duty. To obey it was to ‘participate in evil’ and incur moral responsibility for its consequences.

Gandhi believed that the participation of the people should be very active and regular in the government system. According to him, decentralisation could provide individuals the opportunity to participate in the management of their own affairs and a feeling of self government.

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Gandhi said that Swaraj government would be sorry affair if people would look-up to it for the regulation of every detail of life. He expected active participation of the people in this type of government. He argued that true democracy could not be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It had to be worked from below by the people of every village.

Gandhi argued that the power would be decentralised in such a way that even the smallest man could enjoy freedom, without any social, political or economic disability. He believed that for the attainment of swaraj, decentralisation of power was essential and it was possible only by the proper functioning of Gram-swaraj. Gram meant a village and swaraj meant freedom, independence and self-rule. Thus it would mean freedom, liberty, independence, self-rule of villages. Gram-swaraj literally meant village self-government but its real meaning was far deeper. It meant a total transformation of villages from dung heaps as they were in Gandhi’s time or ecologically destroyed as they are today into vibrant communities not only in economics but also in social and cultural senses. It also meant developing human personality marked with self-reliance, self-control and self-esteem, which was not swayed by things and ideas that are sensually attractive. It meant self-governance and self-management of village communities wherein the dignity of the individuals was ensured, each one was involved in creative

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activities and nothing was done that disturbed the ecological balance in the village.

Gram-swaraj aimed at ending the individual ownership of means of production, other resources and property. It also aimed at making every village self-sufficient, self-reliant and self-governing entity. It involved a radical simplification of the mechanics of living, and the organization of the society on the basis of small, manageable, autonomous village units in which rural communities regionally self-sufficient in respect of their basic needs, would wield effective power. However, Gandhi never believed in the isolated or narrow conception of gram-swaraj, on the other hand, he believed in harmonious relationship and dignified interdependence with neighbours. To quote him, "My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity." He further said, "Indian independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat, having full powers. If follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing it's affairs, even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world ... But this does not exclude dependence on the willing help from neighbours or from the world."  

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48 M.K. Gandhi, Village Swaraj, p. 31.
The basic principles of *gram-swaraj* as laid down by Gandhi were supremacy of man, the best utilization of the whole manpower of India, bread labour, equality, trusteeship, decentralisation, swadeshi, self-sufficiency, cooperation, satyagraha, equality of all religions and village governance by panchayats.

Gandhi was concerned about villages not only because majority of people in India lived in villages and they led a pitiable life but also because village life alone would save humanity from decay and disaster. As he argued, "If the village perishes India will perish too. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost." He further said, "To serve our villages is to establish Swaraj. Everything else is but an idle dream."¹⁰⁰

According to Gandhi, *Gram swaraj* was not something that could just be attained by asking, nor was it something that could be achieved in a short time. It involved total transformation of the outlook of the people living in villages. He believed in preparing the mindset of the villagers to be changed to work for achieving the goal of *gram swaraj*. He persuaded a large number of Congressmen to go to the villages and devote themselves to the 'silent' and 'invisible' but vital task of 'leavening' the 'inert mass'. He thought of them as his 'army for swaraj', quietly working behind the back and corroding the

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basis of the colonial state and preparing for its eventual replacement by a distinctively Indian polity under their leadership.  

More explicitly, these institutions were to be governed by the local people (i.e. elected/nominated representatives of the people at large living in the said locality) and naturally endowed with the responsibility to utilise efficiently, effectively and economically locally available resources to meet the local objectives. Thus through the decentralization of power from the centre to the village level, Gandhi aspired for perfect democracy, in which everyone would play his active role in the government system.

Gandhi also aspired for creating a society of his dreams or an ideal society. He differentiated between ideal society and practicable state. He often used the words *Ramraj* and *swaraj* for indicating his concepts of an ideal society and state.

Gandhi's ideal society was *Ramrajya*. *Ramrajya* was the establishment of a just and perfect society or kingdom of righteousness on earth. It is believed that by *Ramraj*, Gandhi meant the rule of *Rama*, son of Dasharatha, king of Ayodhya. But Gandhi had made it amply clear that his *Rama* was not the *Rama* of Ayodhya and that his *Ramraj* was not the same as the kingdom of Dasharatha's son. He used the name *Rama* to describe

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52 Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophies*, p. 117.
God, the eternal, the unborn, the one without the second. He wanted this kingdom of God on the earth in the present and not merely in the Heaven in the future. The picture of Ramrajya that Gandhi visualized was an expression of his yearning for a just and perfect society – the Kingdom of Righteousness on earth. He further added:

It can be religiously translated as kingdom of God on Earth; politically translated it is perfect democracy in which inequalities based on possession and non-possession, colour, race or creed or sex vanish. In it, land and state belong to the people, justice is prompt, perfect and cheap and, therefore, there is freedom of worship, speech and the Press – all this because of the reign of the self-imposed law of moral restraint. Such a State must be based on Truth and Non-violence, and must consist of prosperous, happy and self-contained villages and village communities. It is a dream that may never be realized. I find happiness in living in that dreamland, ever trying to realize it in the quickest way.

In 1937, Gandhi described Ramraj as sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority, as distinguished from the British, Soviet or Nazi system of rule. Later, Gandhi added a concrete meaning to the term (Ramraj) by stating that, “At the risk of repetition, I must say that independence of my dream means Rama-Rajya i.e. the Kingdom of God on Earth. I do not know what it will be like in Heaven. I have no desire to know the distant scene. If the present is attractive enough, the future

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cannot be very unlike. He had related Ramrajya with independence by saying that Ram-rajya or kingdom of God on Earth was independence of his dreams.

In an ideal society of Ramrajya or kingdom of god upon earth, there would be the sovereignty of the moral authority of the people. The ideal society for Gandhi would be a non-violent society where individuals would enjoy perfect liberty, equality and social justice. According to him, the ancient ideal of Ramraj was undoubtedly one of true democracy in which the meanest citizens would be sure of swift justice without an elaborate and costly procedure. The basis of that society was moral law resulting from the practice of truth and ahimsa. His ideal society would be an egalitarian non-violent, democratic order, based on moral values.

Gandhi envisaged his own system of education, economics, religion and political organization, which would, in his opinion, produce free and independent moral beings who would stick to truth and non-violence, come what may. To Gandhi, ideal society was just like a family having a close interdependence among its members. While he recognized the right of the individual to fundamental liberties, he rejected unrestricted individualism that ignored social obligations. According to him, in his ideal society, the humblest might feel equal to the tallest. This could take place only by

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57 Ibid.
capital or capitalists sharing their skill and capital with the lowliest and the least.

According to Gandhi, Ramraj meant more than Swaraj or political self-government. "Execution of the constructive programme in its entirety means more than swaraj", Gandhi exclaimed, "It means Ram Raj, Khudai Sultanat, or the Divine kingdom. I am thirsting after such Ram Raj. My God does not reside up above. He has to be realized on earth. He is here within you, within me. He is omnipotent and omnipresent. You need not think of the world beyond. If we can do our duty here, the beyond will take care of itself. This necessarily includes political independence." Similarly, Gandhi stressed that Ramrajya included swaraj. As he said, "claiming as you do, allegiance to India and endorsing as you do your connection with the story of Ramayana, you should be satisfied with nothing but Ram Raj which includes Swaraj."

Mahatma Gandhi also believed that Ramrajya was a stage beyond Swaraj. To quote him: "I have given my most earnest thought to it and have come to the conclusion that we can have swaraj, even RamRaj, if we fulfil the triple programme – a programme in which men and women, young and old, Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians, the Government servants and all can alike

take part.” According to Gandhi, *Ramrajya* was acme of *swaraj*. In his presidential address at the third Kathiawad Political Conference held at Bhavanagar, January 8, 1925, Gandhi said:

Rama did justice even to a dog. By abandoning his kingdom and living in the forest for the sake of truth Rama gave to all the kings of the world an abject-lesson in noble conduct. By his strict monogamy he showed that a life of perfect self-restraint could be led by a royal householder. He lent splendour to his throne by his popular administration and proved that *Ramrajya* was the acme of Swaraj. Rama did not need the very imperfect modern instrument of ascertaining public opinion by counting votes. He had captivated the hearts of the people. He knew public opinion by intuition as it were. The subjects of Rama were supremely happy. Such *Ramrajya* is possible even today. The race of Rama is not extinct. In modern times the first caliphs may be said to have established *Ramarajya*. Abubaker and Hazrat Umar collected revenue running into crores and yet personally they were as good as fakirs.

While addressing the predominantly Muslim audiences, Gandhi also described it as *Khudai Raj* and defined it as a state which would be free of all inequalities, in which justice would be prompt, perfect and inexpensive and the freedom of worship, speech and the press would be sustained by the power of healthy and well-informed public opinion and would be able to promote the moral, social and economic development of all classes of the people. It would depict true democracy, free from inequalities, injustices and exploitation and would aim at the welfare of the people of India as well of the world as a whole.

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People would realise and obey all the rules willingly, voluntarily and cheerfully. In such a self-regulated society, there would be no distinction between the rules and the ruled. Refuting the criticism of Ramrajya as the Hindu Raj or the rule of Lord Rama, Gandhi asserted that it would be dharmarajya, based on the Truth and morality, a state of enlightened anarchy, a state of spiritual perfection, based on the modern ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity.

Gandhi warned Muslims for misunderstanding the word Ramrajya. According to him, the meaning of Ramraj was not Hindu-Raj. He meant by Ramrajya, the divine raj or the kingdom of God. He stressed that Ram and Rahim were one and the same deity. While referring to the criticism of the employment of the term Ramrajya for his ideal society, Gandhi justified by stressing that, “Let no one commit the mistake of thinking that Rama-rajya means a rule of the Hindus. My Rama is another name for Khuda or God. I want Kudhai Raj, which is the same thing as the Kingdom of God on Earth. The establishment of such a Rajya would not only mean welfare of the whole of the Indian people but of the whole world.”

He further added, “It is a convenient and expressive phrase, the meaning of which no alternative can so fully express to millions. When I visit the Frontier province or address predominantly Muslim audiences, I would express my meaning to them by

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calling it Khudai Raj, while to Christian audience I would describe it as the Kingdom of God on earth."  

To Gandhi, the voice of the enlightened conscience of the individual was superior to the dictates of laws of the state. In this regard, he was similar to Thoreau, who appealed to the citizens to have the courage to rise in revolt against laws which appeared immoral to them. Thus, in Gandhi's *Ramrajya*, there was no role of the state. People were enlightened so much that they did not require laws of state to regulate them. To quote him, "Political power means capacity to regulate national 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 every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a 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. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that government is best which governs the least."  

Contrary to Hegel, who considered the state as its own end, Gandhi considered it as one of the means, only for the service of man. He believed that if people consciously retained political powers in their own hand, the state interference with their freedom would be reduced to the minimum.

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65 Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 41.
Gandhi further said that the organs of the government should act as genuine servants of the people, watchful to their interest and ever eager to fulfill their obligations to the best of their ability. The entire structure of Government should run in a manner that it results in the achievement of good of all the people in all the fields of human activity. Only when such a system was established, that Gandhi’s Swaraj would have been realised. Such a Swarajist state would provide maximum initiative and opportunity to the people to govern themselves the way they want. The more frequent and active the people’s participation in their governance, the less would be the need of a government to impose its will on the people. Such a devolution of political power from the government to the people themselves would minimize the occasions of the state to compel obedience and extract cooperation. Once the people get used to render willing obedience and voluntary cooperation, the state, as an embodiment of physical force or organized violence, would no longer be needed, it would disappear, wither away, leaving the people free to approximate to the ultimate state of Shashan Mukta Samaj, a stateless society, a state of nature, the kingdom for God on Earth in which, like Rousseau, Gandhi thought people might have originally lived. Gandhi’s swaraj was, thus, not an end in itself, but only an effective means to the realisation of a stateless society. The purpose of Gandhi’s Swarajist state was to establish Ramrajya, the rule of dharma, or the kingdom of God on Earth.
Gandhi's concept of Swaraj was comprehensive in nature. He talked of *Poorna Swaraj*. *Poorna Swaraj* was *Poorna* (complete) because it was for all sections of the society irrespective of caste, creed, gender and class. To quote him, "*Poorna Swaraj* – 'Poorna' complete because it is as much for the prince as for the peasant, as much as for the rich landowner as for the landless tiller of the soil, as much for the Hindus as for the Musalmans, as much for Parsis and Christians as for the Jains, Jews, and Sikhs irrespective of any distinction of caste or creed or status in life." Visualizing the social dimension of *swaraj*, Gandhi conceived of a new social order which did not suffer from social evils and economic inequalities. As he said, "Real organic Swaraj is a different question. That freedom which is associated with the term Swaraj in the popular mind is no doubt unattainable without not only the removal of untouchability and the promotion of heart unity between the different sections but also without removing many other social evils that can be easily named. That inward growth which must never stop, we have come to understand by the comprehensive term Swaraj. And that Swaraj cannot be had so long as walls of prejudice, passion and superstition continue to stifle the growth of that stately oak."

Gandhi stressed that no one was born untouchable and unequal. Removal of untouchability meant removal of social barriers and inequalities.

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Thus the insistence on removal of untouchability was central to social dimension of Gandhi's concept of swaraj. Gandhi had himself made it clear, "The struggle for Swaraj is a movement for emancipating ourselves from our sins. Self-purification means being free from sins. So long as the Antyajas’ untouchability has not ended, that of the Hindus will not end either... How can Swaraj ever be won so long as sinful practice of treating the Antyajas as untouchables is not given up?" He added, "So long as the Hindus willfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, Swaraj is impossible of attainment. Yudhishthira would not enter heaven without his dog. How can, then, the descendants of that Yudhishthira expect to obtain Swaraj without the “untouchables”?

According to Gandhi, untouchables needed protection from social and religious persecution. He believed that custom which was often more powerful than law, had brought them to a degradation of which every Hindu should be ashamed and do penance. Gandhi believed that swaraj was a meaningless term if untouchables were kept under perpetual subjection and were denied deliberately the fruits of national culture. He argued, "If we came into power, with the stain of untouchability uneffaced, I am positive that the ‘untouchables’ would be far worse under that ‘Swaraj’ than they are

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now, for the simple reason that our weakness and our failings would then be buttressed up by the accession of power. That in brief is my position, and I have always held that this self-purification is an indispensable condition of Swaraj. It is not a position that I have arrived at today. It is as old as when I began to think of Swaraj.  

According to him, the most important thing to do was purification from within. So long as the poison of untouchability remained in the Hindu body, it would be liable to attacks from outside. It would be proof against such attacks only when a solid and impregnable wall of purification was erected in the shape of complete removal of untouchability.

Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi's swaraj was egalitarian and secular in nature. According to him, Hind Swaraj was the rule of all people irrespective of any discrimination on the basis of religion. In the social dimension of his concept of Swaraj Gandhi laid great stress on Hindu-Muslim unity also. He stressed that India could not win swaraj if eight or more crores of Muslmans were opposed to it. It was difficult to attain swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity. To quote him, "The union that we want is not a patched-up thing but a union of hearts based upon a definite recognition of the indubitable proposition that Swaraj for India must be an impossible dream without an indissoluble union between the Hindus and the Muslims of India. It must not be a mere truce. It cannot be based upon mutual fear. It

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Ibid., p. 12
must be a partnership between equals, each respecting the religion of other.”  

Gandhi stressed that only a community constituted by persons imbued with a sense of deep social cohesiveness could attain the benefit of swaraj. He said, “The views that I have held for the last 40 years remained unchanged. I hold that there is no Swaraj without communal unity, as without several other things I have repeatedly mentioned.”

It also implied that people would follow the ideal of peaceful co­existence. He stressed on settling down the differences by arbitration. According to him, before the rulers Indians must be able to present a united front and demonstrate to the world their capacity for regulating their own manners if they would have swaraj. Gandhi invited Muslims to join the Congress in large number immediately if they wanted to be in power under swaraj. He believed that there should be no social suppression of one community by another. He stressed that there was no use of attaining swaraj from English or British rule if it would be substituted by any other domination. He said, “The idea of killing the Muslims if they do not remain in subjection may have been all right in bygone days; it has not meaning today. There is no force in the cry of driving out the English if the substitute is to be Hindu or any other domination. That will be no Swaraj.”


Gandhi stressed that in the India of his dream, minority should not feel small on the score of its religious profession. He warned Hindus for believing that they had the upper hand while according to him, some Musalmans were afraid that they would have to play the underdog in the union. He argued that, “The Hindus want Swaraj in India, and not a Hindu Raj. Even if there is a Hindu Raj, and toleration one of its features, there will be place in it for the Musalmans as well as the Christians.”

Moreover, Gandhi believed that swaraj would not be complete without due place and honourable role for the women in the society. He stressed that there should not be domination of women by men. According to him, men and women should have equal opportunities to develop their personality. The woman too like man was entitled to a supreme place in her sphere of activities. Gandhi was categorical that real swaraj would come only after the condition of women was improved or when she was given her due place in society. As he observed, “To call woman the weaker sex is libel; it is man’s injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then, indeed, is woman less brute than men. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man’s superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is

the law of our being, the future is with woman... who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman." 

Similarly, Gandhi raised his voice against child marriage, to which, according to him, it was irreligious to give religious sanction. To quote him, "The custom of child marriage is both a moral as well as physical evil for it undermines our morals and induces physical degeneration. By countenancing such customs, we recede from God as well as Swaraj." Like child marriage, Gandhi believed that purdah was one of the social evils of the society. It has impeded the march towards Swaraj. According to him, purdah not only denied the freedom to the women, but also the free gifts of God like light and fresh air. He called the people to “tear down purdah with one mighty effort.”

Gandhi was of the opinion that women could play an active role in a non-violent political movement. He appreciated the role played by them in the non-violent struggle for independence of India. Gandhi said that the first reform for the women should be to understand the important idea of freedom. According to him, they should cherish it as a part of dharma and it should be their duty to inculcate the values of independence, fearlessness and firmness in their children. He stressed that it would be in vain to hope for swaraj so

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76 Chitra Purohit, Gandhi Concept of Swaraj (Jaipur: Classic Publication, 1999), p. 88.
long as women did not make their full contribution to the effort. According to him, men are not as conscientious as women in such matters. If the women did not know or did not accept their duty of preserving the nation's freedom, or of winning it back when it was lost, it would be impossible to defend it.

The true swaraj that Gandhi envisaged was a multi-class swaraj, no class or stratum of the society being excluded. Gandhi's realistic mind and sensitive soul could see through the inadequacy of upper-class swarāj – swarāj of moneyed men and educated classes. That explains why he always insisted on poor man's or people's swarāj.  

He indeed pleaded for a multi-class approach and an all-inclusive swaraj composed of all classes. His swaraj presented itself as 'being not partial to some or prejudicial to others' but at the same time he was emphatic in his statements that every interest, not subserving the interests of the poor, shall have to go under. It was not merely a question of sympathy for the poor, as has often been made out, rather it was more in the nature of feeling of solidarity and identification with the masses. Gandhi did not teach the masses to regard the upper class as their enemies, but he did teach them that they (masses) were their own enemies. According to him, the consciousness of the wrong done to them by upper classes had to be created in them.

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79 Ibid., p. 282.
Gandhi insisted on the *swaraj* of the downtrodden and backward sections of the society and argued that it should not be limited to the educated class and rich people. To quote, “The Swaraj of my dream recognises no race or religious distinction. Nor is it to be the monopoly of the lettered persons nor yet of monied men. Swaraj is to be for all, including the former, but emphatically including the maimed, the blind, the starving toiling millions.”

Similarly, according to Mahatma Gandhi, the *Swaraj* of his dream was the poor man’s *Swaraj*. In his economic connotation of *swaraj*, he believed that the necessaries of life should be enjoyed by poor people in common with those enjoyed by the princes and the monied men. As he said, “But that does not mean that they should have palaces like theirs. They are not necessary for happiness. You or I would be lost in them. But, you ought to get all the ordinary amenities of life that a rich man enjoys. I have not the slightest doubt that Swarajya is not *Purna* Swarajya until these amenities are guaranteed to you under it.”

According to Gandhi, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. He emphasized that this could be realized only if the means of production of the elementary necessaries of life remained in the control of the masses. The elementary necessaries of life

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81 Ibid.
should be freely available to all as God's air and water were or ought to be. To quote him, "we have a parliament of our own, people may not feel that they are free. Swaraj therefore, means easy availability of food and cloth."\footnote{\textit{The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XX}, p. 506.}

Gandhi believed that working for economic equality meant abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It meant the leveling down of the few rich in whose hands was concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the leveling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. Gandhi stressed that \textit{swaraj} he advocated would be a meaningless term if about forty million people were kept under perpetual subjugation. He said, "I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt ... try the following expedient: Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he be able to gain anything by it? Will it restore him to be a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to \textit{Swaraj} or self-rule for the hungry and also spiritually starved millions of our countrymen?"\footnote{A colleague of Bapu, "Towards True Swaraj" in Subrata Mukherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy, ed., \textit{Facets of Mahatma Gandhi: Economic and Social Principles}, Vol. III, p. 73.}

According to Gandhi, when an individual had more than his requirement, he must act as a trustee of that excess income. Gandhi tried to solve the problem of equality by institution of trusteeship. According to him, the meaning of trusteeship was that a rich man was allowed to retain his
property, but was expected to hold his wealth and personal talents in trust and to use them for the service of society. Gandhi believed that if bread labour doctrine was accepted, there would be no distinction between the capital and labour. The capitalists like the labourers would do the body-labour for their bread and would act as trustees of their property for the benefit of the labourers in particular and the society in general. Thus socio-economic equality would be assured.

Gandhi gave special importance to Swadeshi for the attainment of Swaraj. According to him, swaraj was wholly attainable through swadeshi. To quote him, “If we have no regard for our respective vernaculars, if we dislike our clothes, if our dress repels us, if our food is distasteful to us, our climate is not good enough, our people uncouth and unfit for our company, our civilization faulty and the foreign attractive, in short, if everything native is bad and everything foreign pleasing to us, I should not know what Swaraj can mean for us.”

In its ultimate and spiritual sense swadeshi stood for the final emancipation of the human soul from its earthly bondage. A votary of swadeshi, therefore, in his striving to identify himself with the entire creation, seeks to be emancipated from the bondage of the physical body. According to Gandhi, Gita said, “It is best to die performing one’s own duty

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or *svadharma*: *paradharma* or another's duty is fraught with danger."\(^{85}\)

Interpreted in terms of one's physical environment, this gave the law of *swadeshi*. According to him, what the *Gita* said with regard to *swadharma* equally applied to *swadeshi*. *Swadeshi* was *swadharma* applied to one's immediate environment.

Gandhi said that the practice of *swadeshi* could never do harm to any one, and if it did, it was not *swadharma* but egotism. He said, "The law of *Swadeshi* requires me no more than to discharge my legitimate obligations towards my family by just means, and the attempt to do so will reveal to me the universal code of conduct."\(^{86}\)

According to Gandhi, in *swadeshi* there was no room for selfishness, or if there was selfishness in it, it was of the highest type, which was not different from the highest altruism. *Swadeshi* in its purest form was the acme of universal service.

*Swadeshi* meant that a country should be self-sufficient in meeting her needs and it must use the articles made in the country itself. Gandhi argued that even the uncivilized tribes of South Africa were enjoying Swaraj. These Negroes produced their own food-stuffs and their clothing. They lived on maize and gram. They clothed themselves in the hides of animals killed


by them. Gandhi asserted that country, the people of which could not well order their own needs of food and clothing was not at all fitted to enjoy Swaraj. According to him, India enjoyed Swaraj in the past but as soon as she gave up using her own articles she lost Swaraj.

Gandhi said, “Swadeshi restricts all Indians to the exclusive use of articles made in India. It contains our economic independence; Swadeshi, therefore, means fiscal autonomy. Without fiscal autonomy Swaraj has no meaning; swadeshi therefore may be called Swaraj also.” Swadeshi was the essence of his economic Swaraj.

However, Gandhi had never considered the exclusion of everything foreign under every conceivable circumstances as a part of Swadeshi. The broad definition of Swadeshi was the use of all home-made articles to the exclusion of foreign things in so far as such use was necessary for the protection of home-industry, more specially those industries without which India would become pauperized. In his opinion, Swadeshi which excluded the use of everything foreign, because it was foreign, no matter how beneficent it might be and irrespective of the fact that it impoverished nobody, was a narrow interpretation of Swadeshi. To quote him, “To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign and to go on wasting national time and money to promote manufactures in one’s country for which

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it is not suited, would be criminal folly, and a negation of the Swadeshi spirit. A votary of Swadeshi will never harbour ill will towards the foreigner, he will not be moved by antagonism towards anybody on earth. Swadeshism is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service that has its roots in the purest Ahimsa i.e. love."  

Although the concept of swadeshi had wide implications but India was in such a ruined condition of economic backwardness that it was not in a position to produce all the necessaries of life. So Gandhi restricted swadeshi to the most important necessaries of life. Most pressing was clothing and hence the essence of swadeshi consisted in restricting to the use of cloth produced in India. He considered Khadi as a necessary and the most important corollary of the principle of swadeshi in its application to society. Gandhi said, “What is the kind of service”, I asked myself, “that the teeming millions of India most need at the present time that can be easily understood and appreciated by all, that is easy to perform and will at the same time enable the crores of our semi-starved countrymen to live,” and the reply came that it was the universalization of Khadi or the spinning wheel alone that could fulfil these conditions. Gandhi emphasized that certain qualities for swaraj such as honesty, unity, firmness, organizing power, capacity to

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89 Nirmal Kumar Bose, Selections from Gandhi, p. 108.
90 M.K. Gandhi, Khadi, pp. 43-44.
buildup national trade, country wide spirit of patriotism and so on could be inculcated by reviving the spinning wheel.  

While extending the meaning of swadeshi in terms of self-sufficiency to the village level, he emphasised that every village should be self-sufficient. To quote him, “Self-sufficiency is a big word ... Villages will be swept away, if they are not self-sufficient as to their primary wants and self-reliant as to their protection against internal disruption by dissensions and disease and external danger from thieves and dacoits. Self-sufficiency, therefore, means all the cotton processes and growing of seasonal food crops and fodder for cattle. Unless this is done there will be starvation.” According to Gandhi the idea of self-sufficiency was that villages must be self-sufficient in regard to food, cloth and other basic necessities.

Gandhi wanted to make the individual and society both self-supporting by his scheme of education. Education under swaraj, Gandhi said, should aim at making pupils self-reliant right from the early years. The students should live for others and not for themselves. They should have the capacity to die for India and should not live as witness to her shame. He said, “As for food, India has plenty of fertile land, there is enough water and no dearth of man power... The public should be educated to become self-

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91 Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XX, p. 79.
92 M.K. Gandhi, Village Swaraj, pp. 63-64.
reliant. Once they know that they have got to stand on their own legs, it would electrify the atmosphere."  

Education did not mean to Gandhi only a knowledge of letters but it meant character building and knowledge of duty. According to him, education should enhance alround development of the personality of the individual along with some vocational training to cater the economic needs of the members of society. He said, “Given the right kind of teachers, our children will be taught the dignity of labour and learn to regard it as an integral part and a means of their intellectual growth, and to realize that it is patriotic to pay for their training through their labour. The one of my suggestion is that handicrafts are to be taught, not merely for productive work, but for developing the intellect of the pupils.”

In Gandhian philosophy means and ends were convertible terms. The two were inseparable and should be equally pure. That the end was high and laudable was not enough for him, the means too must be moral. In fact, the means were to him everything. He said, “they say ’means are after all means’. I would say ’means are after all everything’. As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end. Indeed the creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none

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over the end. Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception.  

The emphasis on the means was partly due to the fact that man could only strive, he could not command results. Gandhi believed that the end was primary and the means was contributory and because it was contributory it must be good and pure. He believed that the means used should in no way detract from the moral character of our end. Hence, his repeated insistence on the purity of means and his effort to give concrete expression in the form of *Satyagraha*, to the principle of moral approximation of the end and the means was, perhaps, the most unique contribution to the philosophy and technique of revolution.  

In March 1921, Gandhi declared that *satyagraha* was literally holding on to Truth and it means, therefore, ‘truth-force or soul force’. It excluded the use of violence because man was not capable of knowing the absolute truth and was, therefore, not competent to punish.  

Etymologically, the term *satyagraha* means passion for, or firmness in Truth – Sanskrit *satya* (= Truth) + *agraha* (= passion or firmness). Thus

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96 Krishna Kripalani, ed., *All Men are Brothers*, p. 105.  
satyagraha means firm adherence to Justice. The term was coined by Gandhi because he felt that the English term "passive resistance", which was largely derived from the Christian concept of non-resistance to evil, failed to express adequately the nature of non-violent resistance in the active form developed by him. He had led the South African Indian Movement for over a decade when in 1906 the need for a new name for his movement was felt by him for the first time. In Hind Swaraj, however, he continued to talk of "passive resistance", and it was only after he returned to India and assumed the leadership of the national movement that he started consistently using the term satyagraha to denote his kind of non-violent resistance.

Gandhi firmly believed that Satyagrahi should be disciplined and obedient to the principles of struggle for attaining swaraj. He said, "No organisation can be run with success if its members, especially its officers,


100 M.K Gandhi, Autobiography (Bombay: Hind Kitabs Limited, 1950), p. 162. In his Autobiography Gandhi has narrated the circumstances in which the term was coined as follows: "The principle called Satyagraha came into being before that name was invented. Indeed when it was born, I myself could not say what it was. In Gujarati also we used the English phrase "passive resistance" to describe it. When in a meeting with Europeans I found that the term "passive resistance" was too narrowly construed, that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, that it could be characterized by hatred, and that it could finally manifest itself as violence, I had to demur to all these statements and explain the real nature of the Indian movement. It was clear that a new word must be coined by the Indians to designate their struggle."
refuse to carry out its policy and hold onto it inspite of opposition to it. For winning Swaraj one requires iron discipline.”

According to Gandhi, the true satyagrahi would follow the path of truth (satya) and non-violence (ahimsa). He believed that satya (truth) was essentials for attaining swaraj. To quote him, “The philosophers’ stone which can bring this about consists of two syllables: satya. If, therefore, every Indian makes it a point of follow truth always, India will achieve swarajya as a matter of course.”

Non-violence was an another essential principle of satyagraha. Non-violence (ahmisa) meant absence of himsa. Himsa meant hurting or injuring others. According to Gandhi, Ahimsa was essential for the attainment of swaraj. He said, “So long as we are not saturated with pure Ahimsa, we cannot possibly win Swaraj through non-violence. We can come into power only when the large majority of people are willing to abide by the law of Ahimsa. When this happy state prevails, the spirit of violence will have come under control.”

According to Gandhi, for a non-violent struggle to win swaraj, there was no age-limit, the blind and the maimed and the bed-ridden might serve. Even women could participate in the struggle to win swaraj. Gandhi argued

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101 Nirmal Kumar Bose, Selections from Gandhi, pp. 138-139.
that in non-violent struggle for *swaraj*, all people could take equal part, which was not possible in a violent struggle. He said, "The world is watching with astonished interest the fact that, although we have no arms, we are hoping to win *Swaraj*, and have indeed come very near it."  

Similarly, non-cooperation too was a branch of *satyagraha*. It implied withdrawal of cooperation from a state because in the non-cooperator's view, it had become corrupt. Cooperation with such state meant cooperation with corruption. Gandhian concept of non-cooperation was based on love towards the opponent. It was a measure of discipline and sacrifice and it demanded patience and respect for opposite views. According to him, non-cooperation was bred in the very marrow of every Indian. It was the part of every religion. Gandhi placed the scheme of non-cooperation to achieve *swaraj*. He asserted that if there was a sufficient response to his scheme, *swaraj* could be gained in the course of an year. To quote him, "It was not a joke when I said on the congress platform that Swaraj could be established in one year if there was sufficient response from the nation... We seem to be labouring under the illusion that we cannot possibly live without Councils, law courts and schools provided by the Government. The moment we are disillusioned we have Swaraj."  

Under the scheme of non-cooperation for attaining *swaraj*, Gandhi advocated surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from

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nominated seats in local bodies, refusal to attend Government Levies, Durbars and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials or in their honour and gradual withdrawal of children from Schools and Colleges owned, aided or controlled by Government. As he said, “I therefore venture to suggest to the students all over India to suspend their normal studies for one year and devote their time to the manufacture of yarn by hand spinning. It will be their greatest act of service to the motherland, and their most natural contribution to the attainment of Swaraj.”

Similarly he asked for boycott of British Courts by lawyers and litigants and establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid for the settlement of private disputes. Gandhi wanted that there should be withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the Reformed councils and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who might, despite the Congress advice offer himself for election. To quote him, “Swarajya has to be gained through the councils or without the councils. If we utterly distrust the British Government and we know that they are utterly unrepentant how can you believe that the councils will lead to Swarajya and not tighten the British hold on India?”

Similarly, Gandhi wanted refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring class to offer themselves to British government. An another important tool of non-cooperation was the boycott of foreign goods. According

\[106\] Ibid., p. 30.
\[107\] Ibid., p. 6.
to him, India could not be free so long as India voluntarily encouraged or tolerated the economic drain which had been going on for the past century and a half. Boycott of foreign goods meant no more and no less than boycott of foreign clothes. Foreign clothes constituted the largest drain permitted by the Indians. He stressed that if India could make a successful effort to stop that drain, she could gain swaraj by that one act.

During the last quarter of 1920 he particularly emphasized the boycott of the Government – controlled schools and colleges, boycott of the law-courts and legislative councils, and boycott of foreign goods and adoption of swadeshi. He said, "and truly control our own education, regulate our disputes and be indifferent to their legislation, we are ready to govern ourselves ... The last though not the least important part of the maya is swadeshi ... if we would get rid of the economic slavery, we must manufacture our own cloth and at the present moment only by hand-spinning and hand weaving ... If we show this in one year among the classes that to-day count, and make public opinion, we certainly gain swaraj within one year."  

The boycott of foreign cloth evoked a great deal of enthusiasm all over India. A special feature of the boycott was the burning of foreign cloth at public places to which Gandhi gave his whole hearted support. The popularization of the charkha and the countrywide programme of khadi

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108 Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, Social and Political Thought of Gandhi, p. 298.
production made substantial progress, although the growth of production was slow and far below the target.  

Non-cooperation was regarded by him as one of the most potent weapons of the *Satyagraha*. He said, “Non-violence is a mighty weapon. In action it takes the form of civil disobedience and non-cooperation. Civil disobedience is a very potent weapon. But everyone cannot wield it. For that one needs training and inner strength. It requires occasions for its use. But non-violent, non-cooperation can be practiced by everybody... Those who understand the secret of non-cooperation will find a ready answer for all their difficulties. We must learn resolutely to say ‘No’ when it becomes a duty.”

Civil disobedience was another method of *satyagraha*. Civil disobedience was civil breach of immoral laws. It also came to be understood in the sense of violation of any law as a mark of protest against the unjust government. Civil disobedience was different from criminal disobedience. If disobedience had to be civil, it must be sincere, respectful, restrained, non-violent and never defiant. It meant capacity for unlimited suffering without the intoxicating excitement to killing. According to Gandhi, all civil disobedience was a part or branch of *satyagraha* but all *satyagraha* was not disobedience.


Gandhi believed that civil disobedience was to be adopted by a selected few in the first instance. The mass civil disobedience was the last resort in civil disobedience movement. The civil disobedience technique should be used with sufficient preparation and great caution. As he said, "I repeat what I have said a thousand times that, if millions spun for Swaraj and in the spirit of non-violence, there will probably be no necessity for civil disobedience."\textsuperscript{111}

Moreover, Gandhi regarded constructive work as inseparable part of the technique of \textit{satyagraha} which had accompanied all his efforts at practicing \textit{satyagraha}. The constructive programme, which consisted of creating a set of highly decentralised socio-economic institutions, provided, to Gandhi's mind, the infra-structure of the just society of his conception. Justice was consummated to the maximum practicable extent at each step of the constructive effort involved in the programme.

Logically, the acceptance and completion of the Constructive Programme by a whole nation would have led to the achievement of \textit{Poorna Swaraj} or complete independence. As a matter of fact, as Gandhi insisted, "Its wholesale fulfilment is complete independence."\textsuperscript{112} According to Gandhi, it was unlikely that an entire population would accept the constructive programme as a whole, and there was, therefore, the probability of varying

\textsuperscript{111} N.B. Sen, \textit{Wit and Wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi}, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{112} Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, \textit{Social and Political Thought of Gandhi}, p. 205.
degree of opposition to it, either from the government or from sectional interests or individuals affected by the programme, leading to conflicts and contradictions within the social system, which would be resolved non-violently. This was where *satyagraha* came in.

It was not the main task of social and political workers to launch *satyagrahas* everywhere and to be on the look-out for the opportunity of starting one when there was none. Their main task was to build *swaraj* through a massive constructive effort as Gandhi observed, “It will not drop from heaven all of a sudden one fine morning. But it has to be built up brick by brick by corporate self-effort.” But if in the course of this constructive endeavour they met with opposition from any quarter, they would resort to *satyagraha*. Thus constructive workers were to play the double role of the builders of the ideal society and a reserve army of non-violent resisters.

By constructive programme Gandhi meant the establishment of communal unity, abolition of untouchability, introduction of prohibition through the efforts of doctors, women and students, establishment of *Khadi* production centres in each of the 700,000 villages of India, development of other village industries, improvement of village sanitation, introduction of new or basic education in every Indian village, organization of adult education throughout the country, emancipation of women, establishment of economic equality, development of the provincial languages of India etc.

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113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
Needless to say, the entire effort of the Constructive Programme is to be voluntary and independent of the government and parliament. The whole idea behind the Constructive Programme is the anarchist conception of the gradual replacement of the State and government by autonomous popular institutions constructed voluntarily by the people.

Gandhi connected constructive programme with non-cooperation. The resolution (laying down the programme of the Non-cooperation Movement) emphasized the need for the development of a constructive programme based on khadi as an integral part of the Non-cooperation movement.

After the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922 he retired from active politics for about eight years and devoted himself to the organization and implementation of a programme of constructive work, mainly based on khadi, throughout the country.

Gandhi also connected civil-disobedience with constructive programme. He said that civil disobedience was itself an aid to constructive effort, and a full substitute for armed revolt, but at the same time the best training for proper civil disobedience was through the constructive programme. He said, “I know that many have refused to see any connection between the constructive programme and civil disobedience... But for such an indefinable thing as Swaraj people must have previous training in doing things of all India interest. Such work must throw together the people and

\[115\] Ibid., p. 298.
their leaders whom they would trust implicitly. Trust begotten in the pursuit of continuous constructive work becomes a tremendous asset at the critical moment. Constructive work therefore is for a non-violent army what drilling etc. is for an army designed for bloody warfare. Individual civil disobedience among an unprepared people and by leaders not known to or trusted by them is of no avail, and mass civil disobedience is an impossibility. The more therefore the progress of the constructive programme, the greater is there the chance for civil disobedience." Thus Gandhi formulated a detailed plan based on non-violent means for the attainment of Swaraj.

On the basis of the preceding discussion it can be argued that Gandhi’s concept of swaraj was not static but a dynamic concept. It was very comprehensive in nature. It can be also argued that Gandhi was a revolutionary with the difference that he was a non-violent revolutionary. His contribution lies in integrating politics with morality and in stressing the purity of means for the attainment of swaraj.

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116 Nirmal Kumar Bose, Selections from Gandhi, pp. 141-142.