Chapter :Two

Hind Swaraj and Gandhi’s Nationalism

Anthony Parel calls ‘Hind Swaraj’ as Gandhi’s seminal work. This book was originally written in Gujrati. The backdrop of the book was furnished by the events taking place in India during this period. Gandhi had started his work in South Africa after completing his study of law. There he came across unequal treatment by the whites. In order to demand justice for them he had been to London as a part of the delegation. He was there for around four months. This provided him with an opportunity to have dialogue with the Indians in London. During the discussions he realized that those youth were influenced by the idea of armed rebel for attainment of India’s freedom. V.D. Savarkar was studying law in London at that time. He was an icon for youth who believed in armed rebel. The incident of Colonel Waylee’s assassination was fresh then. The idea of armed rebel was not only popular in India but it had started influencing the Indian youth in South Africa also. While returning to Durban he was so possessed by the situation that he decided to write a book which would provide a guideline to those who wanted to attain freedom. The book was written during his voyage on the ship during 13th to 22nd November 1909. He was fully engrossed in his writing during those ten days. He wrote as if he was possessed. When used to feel tired of writing he would start writing which left hand but he did not stop for rest. That is why he could complete the book within ten days.

Another important feature of this book is that it was translated into English by Gandhi himself. While dealing with the significance of the book Parel quotes waston who states that, “It was this text that Tolstoy and Romain Rolland, Nehru and Rajaji read and commented upon. It was through this, not the Gujrati text, that he hoped, as he put it, ‘to use the British race’ for transmitting his ‘mighty message of ahinsa to the rest of the world. (Parel1997:xiii) Parel also acclaims that “Hindu Swraj is the seed from which the tree of Gandhian though has grown to its full stature. For those interested in Gandhi’s thought in a general way, it is the right place to start, for it is here that he presents his basic ideas in their proper relationship to one another. And for those who wish to study his thought more methodically, it remains the norm by which to access the theoretical significance of his other writings, including the
Autobiography” (Parel 1997: xiii). This should suffice to underline the significance of the book in Gandhi’s philosophy.

Mahadev Desai, a close associate of Gandhi, in preface to Hind Swraj published in 2005 while stating the importance of book says that,

“But whether India may be ripe for it (swaraj) or not, it is best for Indians to study the seminal book which contains the ultimate logical conclusion of the acceptance of the twin principles of truth and Non-violence, and then decide whether these principles should be accepted or rejected.” (Gandhi2005:13-14)

The book was enthusiastically received by readers so it went through several editions. There were varied reactions regarding the book. For example Gopal Krishna Gokhale saw this book in English in 1912. When he visited South Africa, he observed that the book was written in a hurried manner and the language was coarse. He also predicted that Gandhi himself would destroy the book after experiencing India for a year. Instead of destroying it as per the prophecy every time Gandhi revisited the book his views were strengthened.

The book is written in the form of conversation between an editor and his reader. The reader asks questions and the editor answers them. Sometimes the role is reversed, the editor asks question and the reader replies, but generally the earlier is true. Though during this period Gandhi resided in South Africa the book solely deals with the Indian situation.

The reader asks the first question regarding the wave of Home Rule passing over India and eagerness of Indians to achieve National Independence. South Africa was also passing through the similar experiences. The reader expects to know Gandhi’s views about that. In response the latter states that Sir A.O. Hume and Sir William Wedderburn strived hard to awaken Indians. Prof. Gokhale also spent twenty years to prepare the nation. Persons like Tyebji also were active in creating the spirit of nationalism. Dadabhai Naoroji explained how the English had exploited the country. They were all moderates and adopted the methods of mendicancy, as it was derogatively called by the extremists. Gandhi says that they formed a step for us to reach the higher position the movement had acquired, and suggested that where ever it
had reached, had reached because of them. So they should not discard them because they do not resort to methods, which would make India free soon. The reader is confused over Gandhi’s outlook towards the English men like Hume and Wedderburn. Gandhi explains to him that,

“I can never subscribe to the statement that all Englishmen are bad. Many Englishmen desire Home Rule for India. That the English people are somewhat selfish then others in true, but that did not prove that every Englishmen was bad.” (Gandhi2005:20)

This is how he asks his reader to differentiate between friends and foes, and not to take a simplistic view that all the Englishmen are enemies. Gandhi also convinces the reader that the Congress had laid the foundation of nationality by bringing people from all parts of country together.

Though all these stalwarts worked for awakening Indians, the real awakening occurred after the partition of Bengal. Many people in Bengal were ready to lose everything they possessed in order to reunite the province. According to Gandhi this event was so important that he says, “The day may be considered to be the day of partition of the British Empire. The shock the British power received through the partition has never been equaled by any other act.” (Gandhi2005:22) Another effect of this partition was that people realized that there is no use being submissive and the rebellious nature was perceivable through writings in the press as well as in the behavior of people. The spirit of fearlessness generated in Bengal was spread all over the country. It also resulted in causing a split in the Congress and at the time of Surat Congress these two factions, moderates and extremists, disagreed to the point of fighting.

There was an atmosphere of unrest all over the nation. Mr. Hume also said that discontent was necessary because as long as man is content with his condition he would not part with it. There is discontent before every reform.

Gandhi then moves to tell the meaning of the term Swaraj. He makes it clear that people take different meanings of the term. Indians are eager to obtain Swraj but they are not aware of its exactly meaning. He asks a counter question that would we achieve everything by ousting the Englishmen. He then clarifies that.
“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,” (Gandhi 2005:26)

Gandhi tells the reader that the concept of Swaraj is very difficult to understand.

When the reader refers to the English Parliament Gandhi begins to discuss condition of England. He candidly states that,

“That which you consider to be the Mother of Parliament is like sterile woman and prostitute. Both these are harsh terms, but exactly fit, the case. That Parliament has not yet, of its own accord done a single good thing. Hence I have compared it to a sterile woman. The natural condition of that parliament is such that, without outside pressure, it can do nothing. It is like a prostitute because it is under the control of ministers who change from time to time. Today it is under Mr. Asquith, tomorrow it may be under Mr. Balfour.” (Gandhi2005:27)

Gandhi had two problems with the British Parliament, the first was that it did not do anything on its own but required pressure from outside and the other one as that there was no permanent rulers, people kept changing after a fixed period. The representatives were elected by the voters who were supposed to be educated and so capable of making a good choice. Gandhi observes that the members elected by the voters turned out to be insincere and even selfish. Either they talked too much or they dozed while discussion on some important issue went on. This is why Gandhi suggests that, “If the money and time wasted by Parliament were entrusted to a few good men the English nation would be occupying today a much higher platform. Parliament is simply a costly toy of the nation” (Gandhi2005:28). The idea of handing over the responsibility to ‘few good men’ is recurrent in Gandhi writings. Further he states that even the Prime Minister were not good, because they were more committed to their party than the well being of the country. The leaders are corruptible and those people are elected by voters who form their opinions with the help if newspapers which express contradicting opinions. He thinks that the voters do not remain firm on
their opinions, but they keep changing their views periodically. That is why he says that if India emulates them it would be detrimental for it. Gandhi diagnoses the cause of this degeneration and states that this was not so because the English people had committed some mistake but it happened due to the influence of modern civilization. According to him not only England but the whole Europe was a victim of this degeneration and he prophesies that it will be ruined very soon.

Gandhi refers to the modern civilization as a disease. We generally see that there are literary works that defend the civilization. People come under its influence after reading them, but those would wake up and realize their fault. When the reader asks that what did he mean by civilization, in order to explain his point he takes examples. Earlier there were simple houses, people were skins, tilled their land manually, used to walk. Now they have luxurious houses, fine and variety of clothes, machines to plough the land, steam engines and railways. His theme of ‘few men’ reappears even in this connection, He states that earlier few people wrote valuable books. Now anybody is writing and publishing books on any subject and he adds that they are poisoning the minds of people. They do not live in open air but in closed buildings. The condition of the workers in factory is worst than beasts. In the past people were made slaves under physical compulsion now temptation of money enslaves people. He complains that this civilization neither cares for religion nor for morality. All its efforts are directed towards increasing physical comforts. This has caused the man loss of sanity and real physical strength and even courage. That is why they resort to intemperance. Describing women’s condition he states,

“Women, who should be the queens of their households, wander in the streets or they slave away in factories. For the sake of a pittance, half a million women in England alone are laboring under trying circumstances in factories or similar institutions. This awful fact is one of the causes of the daily growing suffragette movement.” (Gandhi2005:33)

He further states that the Parliaments are really emblems of slavery and that the Englishmen deserve our sympathy.

Then the reader asks that if this is the state of Englishmen how did they succeed in conquering India? Gandhi answers that they have not taken India but rather
we had given it to them. They are not here because they possessed superior qualities. Gandhi disclosed to him that they even did not have an intention of ruling the country. They had come with the limited aim of trading. We assisted them in establishing a Kingdom. Our princess had disputes and they sought help of Englishmen in teaching a lesson to each other. Not only there were political rivalries but there were religious rivalries also. There was a rift between Hindus and Muslims. This encouraged the Englishmen to establish their kingdom. He cites Napolean’s remark that ‘England is a nation of shopkeepers’. We like their trade and we entertain them for our petty selfish interests.

Then Gandhi turns to comment on India’s condition on the request of his reader. He states that it was not the real problem India was suffering due to foreign rule. The real problem was its introduction with modern culture. Gandhi asserts that religion was dear to him so his most important complaint was that the country was becoming irreligious. They had forgotten the principle of following Godly pursuit and taken up to the worldly pursuit. When the reader refers to religious fights Gandhi asserts that though the violence was caused in the name of religion, it did not form a part of religion. According to him this happens owing to ignorance and asserts that it would continue so long as the ignorant people exist. He states that the effect of modern civilization was more deplorable than those cruelties, and adds that even religious superstitious were harmless compared to modern civilization. Gandhi tells the principal which form the core of his philosophy in this process and states that absence of fear is courage.

During the discussion on impact of modern civilization on India, Gandhi takes the developments one by one and describes its impact starting with railways. Gandhi candidly states that railways, lawyers and doctors have rendered India penurious. He argues that railways have helped Englishmen to control India easily. Railways have helped in the spread of bubonic plague all over the country. Earlier people had natural segregation but now railways facilitate free movement which in turn helps in spreading epidemics of deadly diseases. He also blames railways for famines. The reason according to him was that the railways linked the famers with markets where they could get highest price for their produce. To earn more they use to sell all they produced having no fear of famines. Railways have also helped people to reach holy places with comfort. Gandhi asserts that it had made holy places in India unholy.
Previously only real devotees went through the trouble of going to these places. With advent of railways rogues had started visiting these places making them unholy. He alleges that railways were agency which helped in distributing and propagating evil. Gandhi states that good travels at a snail’s pace so it does not require railways which increase speed. Only evil needs to travel with speed because it has its selfish motives.

The reader points out that the railways have enhanced the spirit of nationalism amongst the Indians. Gandhi tries to remove his misunderstanding and tells him that English taught that India was not a nation. It was fragmented conglomeration of several princely states fighting against each others. Not only this, they also asserted that it will require centuries for India to become a nation. On the other hand he holds that, “We were one nation before they came to India one thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was because we were one nation that they were able to establish one kingdom. Subsequently they divided us.” (Gandhi2005:40) Gandhi explain the point further by referring to the holy places that, our ancestors established Setubandha at Rameshwar in the South, Haridwar in the North, Jagannath temple in the East and Gandhi asserts that by establishing holy places in various parts they kindled a flame of nationalism in their minds.

The Reader then asks him that people belonging to several religions and faith live in India, same times their traditions are contradicting to each others. With such variety, how can it become a nation? Gandhi replies that due to the fact that people belonging to varied traditions reside in it India cannot cease to become a nation. When some foreigners come to India they homogenize with the local residents. He says that India had the spirit of assimilation so it accommodated all of them. He asserts that those who have spirit of nationalism in them do not intrude into other people’s religions and if they do so, they would not be qualified to be identified as a nation. Responding to inherent enmity between Hindus and Muslims he asserts that both of them have flourished under the regimes of each other and the quarrels started with the arrival of Englishmen. In order to assert the point he goes back to the history and states that those who are Muslims now were Hindus in the past and so their ancestry is common. The same blood runs through their veins. So he insists that whether people become enemies of each other just because they convert to some other faith. Explaining the intrinsic unity between the two he asks, “Is the God of Mahomedan different from the God of Hindu.? Religions are different roads
converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal? Wherein is the cause of quarreling? (Gandhi2005:44) He elucidates his point using the conflicts that existed between Shivas and the Vaishnavas, the two sects of Hinduism and enquires that did that contention divide them in separate religions. The reader raises the question of relations of religions to the cow protection. Answering the query Gandhi admits that he respected cow and had looked upon it with reverence. He was of the opinion that the cow was the protector of India as it was a country where majority of the population was engaged in agriculture and agriculture depended on cow for various reasons. At the same time he states that he also respected his compatriots and believed that they are not any less important than men whether they were Hindus or Muslims. So no question of killing one to save cow arise. The method that he suggests for protection of cow is to fall at the feet of the person who is about to kill a cow and request him to abstain from it. Gandhi also makes it clear that as most of the Hindus eat meat, it could not be said that all of them believe in Ahimsa. So it can’t be argued that the Hindus believe in Ahimsa and Muslims do not, so they can not enjoy a peaceful co-existence. He does not spare the cow protection societies and calls them ‘cow killing’ societies and asserts that they are a disgrace to the society. He insists that, “These thoughts are put in to our minds by selfish and false religious teachers. The English put the finishing touch.” (Gandhi2005-45)

After this discussion Gandhi turns to lawyers and the judicial system which emerged during the British Rule. He claims that lawyers have on the one hand ensured the slavery of India and on the other strengthened the English dominion. Gandhi held that the profession teaches to resort to immoral means. This profession is not taken in order to help people when they are in misery but to earn wealth with the help of their miseries. Lawyers are the people who become happy to see disputes among people. Gandhi speaks about the ways of settling disputes. One of the ways is to engage in a physical fight, but he thinks this to be a sign of slavery. The other is to seek judicial intervention. This according to him is completely unwise. He firmly believed that the disputes must be settled by the disputing parties themselves and no third party should be allowed to arbitrate. Explain how the lawyers help the English Rule, he states that without lawyers courts cannot function and without courts it is impossible for the English to rule. He appeals to the lawyers that if they start thinking
that their profession is as disgraceful as that of prostitution and stop doing it, he was confident that the English rule would collapse instantly.

Doctor is another profession which Gandhi despises. He calls it a parasitical profession. He believes that the English have used it as a tool to captivate Indians. Several royalties used to have English physicians with them who under the garb of providing services worked for meeting their political ends. Gandhi had his own theory of disease. He believed that diseases are caused by one’s indifference or immoderation. The doctors who cure the illness caused because of one’s intemperance helps to habituate to indulgence. On the contrary instead of taking medicine, if one allows the nature to work and observes temperance and moderation the man would be free from vice, this way he become happy.

Another reason for his dislike for this profession is killing of thousands of animals every year for experiments of drugs. There is one more reason for which he has adverse opinion regarding doctors. He states that this profession is anti-religion because the medicines they prescribe contain animal fats or alcohol which is proscribed by Hindus and Muslims. He also claims that study of Europeans medicine would fortify the English Rule and intensify our slavery. Many claim that this profession is a noble one and is meant for human service but Gandhi’s opinion is different. He asserts that those who study European medicine do not do it for human service but they do it with an intention of earning honour and wealth.

The reader is perplexed due to Gandhi’s views on railways, lawyers and doctors so he asks that what did civilization mean? On that Gandhi replies that there were many civilizations in the world in the ancient times. Most of them lost in the course of time, those which exist have given up their own tradition and have accepted western influences. India’s is the only civilization which survived the onslaught of time for so many centuries and had retained its original characteristics. The reluctance to accept change in Indian’s was seen as their ignorance by the English people. But for Gandhi it was a merit. While defining civilization he states that,

“Civilization 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
out passions. So doing, we know
ourselves.”(Gandhi2005-53)

He also adds that equivalent word for civilization in Gandhi is good conduct. He
reminds that mind is very difficult to satisfy. More you give to it, more it demands, it
remains unsatisfactory. This is why the ancestors had clamped limitations on it.
Gandhi also tells that wealth is not a guarantee of happiness. The same ancestors
cautioned against indulgences and luxuries. He gives examples of implements we
have continued to use for thousands of years, preserved same kind of small houses
and the system of education. He also glorifies the fact that as there was system of
allotting occupations on the basis of caste, people followed it honestly. They did not
exploit others. He speaks about one more characteristic of the system that there was
no feeling of competition due to this system. He also hints that the competitiveness in
Englishmen have destroyed their lives. He states that our forefathers have very
thoughtfully decided to do whatever we can do with our own hands and feet.

Gandhi always advocated in favour of small village. Here also he points out
the disadvantages of towns. He says that towns are a hazardous thing, an unnecessary
impediment. He gives explanation and says that people would not be happy in these
towns because there would reside all sorts of immoral people like gangsters, robbers
and prostitutes. These places are dens of vices for him, he believes that the towns are
certainly not good places for the poor to live, because there the rich would rob him.
So Gandhi states, ‘A Nation with a constitution like this is fitter to teach others then to
learn from others.” (Gandhi2005-54) He tells that there were doctors, lawyers and
courts in India also but they operated within the limits of restrictions laid down for
them. There was no feeling of superiority or greed for money. He also asserts that
‘justice was tolerably fair.’ Agriculture was the main occupation of the people so they
were free of evils that corrupted the towns.

Gandhi calls the area which is influenced by the modern civilization as
cursed. In comparison to it he admires the areas where there are no railways, as not
polluted. He tells the people that, “I would certainly advise you and those who like
you who love mother land to go into the interior that has yet been not been polluted
by the railways and to live there for six months; you might then be patriotic and speak
of Home Rule.” (Gandhi 2005:54) Gandhi believes in the necessity of the conditions
mentioned above so firmly that if those who have sympathy for modern civilization are, for him, enemies of the country and sinners.

The reader then points out some customs in Hinduism like child marriage, early child birth, polyandry, Niyoga, dedication of girls to Gods and Godesses who ultimately go into Prostitution and killing animals as offering to Gods asks that are these also symbols of the civilization. Gandhi replies that these are defects. They do not constitute a part of civilization, but they have survived. He also adds that there have been and will be efforts to eradicate such customs but at the same time defends these evil customs saying that, “In no part of world, and under no civilization, have all men attained perfection”. (Gandhi2005:55) He further differentiates between the two civilizations and adds that,

“The tendency of 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.”(Gandhi 2005:55)

Way to Indias Freedom:

Gandhi had discussed the ways of attaining India’s freedom in an implicit manner. Now he decides to tell it clearly. He states that if the causes are removed the effect will disappear, in the same manner if one removes the causes of India’s slavery there is possibility of India gaining freedom. The reader then asks that if he called it the best civilization how was it that India became slave. In reply Gandhi reiterates that the civilization is the best, is without doubt true but some people who followed it had some weaknesses in them, those placed it in endangered situation. He also clarifies that the deterioration was not spread all over the country so all were not slaves. People who were under the influence of the western civilization were only enslaved. If Indians free themselves of such influence then India could become free. Thus he explains that dislodgement of the English should not be our final goal. If they adopt the ways of Indians they will be assimilated in our civilization, but if they insist on sticking to their own civilization there was no place for them.
Gandhi believes that the Englishmen can be convinced and converted because they also believe in humanity but at the same time cautions that unless and until we ourselves adhere to the civilization steadfastly others will not follow us. He states that India is not like other countries, it is unique. It has immense power to face the onslaught. That is why when the other ancient cultures were wiped out, ours have survived. He adds that the English did not come on their own capacity but Indians helped them enter and they were ruling the country because the Indians are helping them to do so. This is all due to attraction of their civilization. He advice that our hatred towards Englishmen should be directed to their civilization that will weaken their grip.

**Comparison between Italy and India:**

Gandhi appreciates Garibaldi and Mazzini who strived to liberate Italy from occupation by Austria. Though Gandhi adores both the leaders, he points out the difference between the two. According to Gandhi Garibaldi believed only in liberating Italy from Austrian control so he supplied arms and every Italian took them. Garibaldi believed that Italy means its king and his deputies. On the contrary Mazzini thought that every Italian must learn the rules to govern. For him Italy did not have a limited meaning. It meant total population of Italy including its peasant and common men. After much violence Austrains were driven out but what difference did it make is important to see. Gandhi remarks that the gain was only nominal. The freedom that Mazzini was expecting did not come. Working class was unhappy and the condition of common masses did not change. Gandhi then describes the condition of India and tells that there are several princely states in India which are despotic and tyrannical. The condition of the people under these despots was worse than those under the English rule. So Gandhi makes it clear that,

“My patriotism does not teach me that I am to allow people to be crushed under the heel of Indian princes if only the English retire. If I have the power, I should twist the tyranny of Indian princes just as much as that of English. By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people, and if I could secure it at the hands of the English, I should bow down my head to them.” (Gandhi2005:59)
Gandhi deals with the popular belief that tit for tat is the best strategy for freedom. He states that for armed struggle thousands of Indian must bear arms. To procure arms on such a large scale would take a long time so the fulfillment of dream of freedom would also be postponed for that many years. He had one more objection to this strategy. In his opinion to arm people meant to acquire European civilization which would not help ultimately. He reiterates that Indian people would not resort to arms and it is in their interest not to do so.

When the reader suggests the alternative of guerilla warfare, Gandhi detests the idea because he believes that bloodshed would make this holy land unholy and reminds that instead of killing we should be ready for self sacrifice. He also opines that the idea of killing others is a cowardly thought. While warning against the violent methods he states,

“Those who will rise to power by murder will certainly not make the nation happy. Those who believe that India has gained by Dhingra’s act and other similar acts in India make a serious mistake. Dhingra was a patriot, but his love was blind. He gave his body in a wrong way; its ultimate result can only be mischievous.” (Gandhi2005:60)

**On Savage Force:**

Gandhi argues against the use of savage force to retaliate with the Englishmen. The reader points it out to him that they had used the same brute force to conquer and even to control the country. Gandhi replies that he agreed that they used the brute force and even Indians could also resort to it but warn that by using that force we shall obtain what they have obtained. Gandhi at this juncture opens discussion on the relation between means and end. In order to make his point easy to understand he seeks help of an analogy. He says that we cannot expect rose if we plant a poisonous plant. For that we will have to plant a rose only. This is how he brings out the relationship between means and end using the parallel of seed and tree and confirms that there is a definite relation between means and end. As a result of acquiring greater voting power with the help of violence has resulted in everybody asking for his rights and nobody caring for his duties. He then dwells upon the issue of
petitioning, and declares that if there is no backing of force behind the petition it is futile. Describing different types of petitions he states that there are two types. First the petition from equals and second the petition from slave. He states that the first is a symbol of courtesy where as the second is a symbol of slavery. According to him petition which has a backing of force is a petition from equal and that demand is an evidence of his nobleness. There are two types of forces according to him. The first signifies that if the demands are not sanctioned we shall hurt you and the second signifies that if the demands are not sanctioned we shall cease to be the petitioners. The first involves physical power, which has its evil effects. The second suggests that though you govern, we refuse to be governed by you. After this discussion he suggests that the use of force against the English would cause harm.

**Passive Resistance:**

Passive resistance is Gandhi’s way of resistance which involves the use of soul force or truth-force. This is what he tells in reply to the reader when he asks that history does not stand a witness to the fact that by using his methods they have succeeded in attaining their freedom. The former quotes Tulsidas, a medieval Hindi poet who said that fundamental principle behind religion is compassion and egotism behind sin, so let us not abandon love as long as we live. Gandhi’s says that what Tulsidas says is a scientific truth for him. Gandhi repeats his principle of cause and effect and tells that “Those that take the sword shall perish by the sword” and adds that, “With us the proverb is that professional swimmers will find a watery grave.” (Gandhi2005:68) Existence of so many people on this earth is, for him, evidence that the world is governed by the principles of love and truth and not by arms and brute force. Millions of families in the world reach the verge of using the force, so many nations come to the point of war but settle the matters amicably which is not recorded by history. He then gives a novel definition of history as “History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul.” (Gandhi2005:68)

Then Gandhi goes on to explain the meaning of passive resistance and states. “Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms.”(Gandhi2005:69) He gives an example that if the Government makes the law which one doesn’t like, instead of opposing it by force
one refuses to obey the law and pays its penalty, it involves the use of soul force, self suffering. He states that no person is infallible everybody has done something wrong sometimes in his life, he adds that, “It is therefore meet that he should not do that which he knows to be wrong, and suffers the consequence whatever it may be. This is the key to the use of soul force.” (Gandhi 2005:69) The reader states that this would amount to disloyalty. To that Gandhi clarifies that the true meaning of the phrase ‘law abiding citizens’ is that they are ‘passive resisters’ who do not obey laws which, they know, are not good. He further adds that, “It is contrary to our manhood if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience. Such teaching is opposed to a religion and means slavery.” (Gandhi2006:70) He then gives the clue to home-rule as when a man comprehends that it is unmanly to abide by a law which is wrongful no coercion can bend him to slavery. At the same time he makes it clear that a person who lacks courage and manhood could never participate in passive resistance. While describing merits of passive resistance he states, “Passive resistance is an all sided sword, it can be used any how; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood it produces far reaching results. It never rusts and cannot be stolen. He adds that kings used swords because that is how they are brought up but the peasants and common men do not make the use of swords. Neither could they be repressed with the sword. It is his belief that in India people generally have used the method of passive resistance in different walks of their lives. The reader asks that whether there is a need to train one’s body for this. Gandhi answers that mind which lives in one’s body becomes weak due to over indulgence and as long as the mind is weak there could not be strength in soul. This makes it necessary to train one for this art. He suggests that by doing away with evil customs such as child marriage and giving up luxurious living one need to improve one’s physique to prepare it for passive resistance. He also adds that in order to participate in freedom movement the person needs to observe perfect chastity, adopt poverty, follow truth and cultivate fearlessness.

For Gandhi chastity was an important virtue without it to acquire firmness of mind was not possible. He says that if a man is unchaste he loses his stamina and lack of stamina makes him emasculated and cowardly. For him, he who is unchaste is a person of animal passions and believes that such people lack capability to participate in great ventures. Gandhi also explains that husband and wife who fulfill biological urge is also not different from animal passion. He states that,
“Such an indulgence, except for perpetuating the race, is strictly prohibited. But a passive resister has to avoid even that very limited indulgence because he can have not desire for progeny. A married man, therefore, can observe perfect chastity.”

(Gandhi2005:73-74)

He states that poverty is also a factor as essential as chastity. Desire to earn wealth and passive resistance cannot go hand in hand. Those who are already wealthy should be indifferent to the wealth and should not repent to part with everything they own. He also asserts the need to adhere to the truth. There should not be dilemma in the mind of a passive resister about it. Other necessary quality is fearlessness. There are many kinds of fears that obstruct our way, there is fear of losing one’s possessions, losing one’s honour, fear of comments from relatives, fear of government and that of injury and death. A passive resister has to get rid of all such fears, he will succeed only then.

**On Education:**

The reader asks that in all the discussion there was no mention of education and refers to the decision of the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwar to introduce compulsory education in his territory. On that Gandhi remarks that,

“If we consider our civilization to be the highest, I have regretfully to say that much of the effort you have described is of no use. The motive of the Maharaja and other great leaders who have been working in this direction is perfectly pure. They, therefore, undoubtedly deserve great praise. But we cannot conceal from ourselves the result that is likely to flow from their effort.”(Gandhi 2005:75)

Gandhi’s reaction to Maharaja’s scheme is not unambiguous. We sense his reservation about it even though he praises it, but expresses doubt about its outcome which, we understand from his language, would not be necessarily positive. While defining education he states that it is merely knowledge of letters and compares it with an instrument which could be used for well being of men as well as for their destruction. He also makes it clear that most of the educated people misuse their skill and people who use it properly are rare. He concludes that education has proved to be detrimental than advantageous.

Generally education means to teach the students reading, writing and arithmetic. Gandhi states that ordinary men have knowledge of world around them.
They know how to behave with people around them. He is moral in his conduct but is illiterate and Gandhi asks,

“Will you add an inch to his happiness? Do you wish to make him discontented with his cottage or with his lot? And even if you want to do that, he will not need education. Carried away by the flood of western thought we come to the conclusion, without weighing pros and cons that we should give this kind of education to people.” (Gandhi2005:76)

He states that he had studied subjects like Geography, Astronomy, Algebra, Geometry etc. He states that though he had studied these sciences and if it is called real education, how is it that he never used it to saddle his senses and adds that whether it is primary or higher education we do not require it absolutely because, “It does not make men of us. It does not enable us to do our duty.” (Gandhi2005:77) He states on his own education that he did not think that in case he had not received any education his life would have been wasted. On the contrary he asserts that they were all victims of what he calls as false education. He assures that reader that he was giving him the benefit of his experience and was demonstrating the term used by him is, rottenness’ of that education system. While having said all these things he adds that he is not completely opposed to it but should not follow it like a maniac is the only thing he expected. Whatever education one gets, should be capable of bringing one’s senses under control is a good education for him. Education that has only cosmetic value is not necessary and should not be made compulsory is his opinion. He mentions that, “Our ancient school system is enough. Character-building has the first place in it and that is primary education. A building erected on that foundation will last.” (Gandhi2005:77)

On the issue of teaching English he states that he would respond in both negative and positive way. He states that the system devised by Macaulay had enslaved people and to give them English education was to enslave them. He also condemns the use of English in various activities, like the Congress proceedings were written in English, best newspapers were English and warns that if this situation remains the coming generations would condemn and curse them. While counting ill effects of English he says, “It is worth noting that by receiving English education, we have enslaved the nation. Hypocrisy, tyranny etc. have increased; English-knowing Indians have not hesitated to cheat and strike terror into the people.” (Gandhi2005:78)
After stating why he says no to education now he states the reasons for favouring it. He says that in order to establish dialogue between the rulers and masses it was necessary that somebody should be able to have a dialogue with them in English. This would be a good use of the education. Yet he cautions that as English has an immoral effect, the English educated persons should teach morality to their children through mother tongue.

Finally the reader asks that what education should we take, and in reply Gandhi says that first of all our languages need to be improved and made medium of instruction. He states that it is cumbersome to learn so many sciences. Religious or ethical education needs to be given priority. Along with the regional language everybody must learn Sanskrit, if a Hindu, and Arabic, if a Muslim and so on. Hindi should be made compulsory subject and apart from that person belonging to one religion should learn the language of scriptures of other religion. He asserts that religious education should be compulsory. Though our priestly class who function as teacher be it whatever religion, has become self centered and dishonest, they need to be consulted. He states that this task is not every difficult because according to him,

“Only the fringe of the ocean has been polluted and it is those who are within the fringe who alone need cleansing. We who come under this category can even cleanse ourselves because my remarks do not apply to the millions. In order to restore India to its pristine condition, we have to return to it. In our own civilization there will naturally be progress, retrogression, reforms, and reactions; but one effort is required, and that is to drive out western civilization. All else will follow.” (Gandhi2005:80) This is how Gandhi associated English language with its culture which according to him had resulted in slavery. So in order to eradicate it he advocates the need to discourage education.

**On Machinery:**

Gandhi at the outset declares that the reason of India’s impoverishment was machinery. He blames Manchester for the misfortunes of Indian handicrafts. But he shifts his stand and states that why blame machines. Indians had developed a taste for imported clothes. Instead of this if they had declared boycott on foreign goods it would have been better. He believes that the machines had made Europe miserable and that desolation was started encompassing Englishmen also. He hates machines
and depicts the effect it had left on the workers working in the mills of Bombay. He says that they had become slaves and adds that the condition of women was even worse. He was so much opposed to the machines that he says,

“It may be considered a heresy, but I am bound to say that it were better for us to send money to Manchester and to use flimsy Manchester cloth than to multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth we only waste our money; but by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped, and I call in support of my statement the very mill hands as witnesses.”(Gandhi2005:81)

When the reader asks as to what to do with the mills, Gandhi answers that the mill owners do not deserve to be condemned, rather they deserve to be pitied. It could not be expected from than to close down the mills but they could be asked to stop increasing their number. He suggests an alternative that with their money they could install ‘ancient and sacred’ handlooms in thousands of houses and purchase their production. A thumb rule for him was to do the same thing that India used to do before arrival of machines.

**Conclusions:**

The reader, with the help of discussion, comes to conclusion that Gandhi was neither a moderate nor an extremist, so he asks him that whether he would form a new party. Gandhi replies that his idea was to serve, so he would serve both the parties and states that those who intend service do not need a party. He suggests to the extremists that merely by driving the English out one cannot have a home rule. Because they advocated use of physical force which was alive to India soil. Gandhi insists that they must make use of soul force and give up violent methods. At the same time he suggests that they believe in petitioning, merely petitioning is humiliating that indicate one’s inferiority. He also comments on their belief that ‘British rule was indispensable and adds that excepting God nothing and nobody is absolutely essential. For them the sense of security they provided was the essence, so he tells them that those who were peaceful during British rule might start violence after they leave. Still he insisted on having no assistance from the third party and expects no tyranny either from English or from Indian rule.
When the reader asks what he would say to the English people, Gandhi says that he accepted that they were rulers and had no objection to their remaining in the country, but expects that they should live as servants of the people, they should behave as per the wishes of people. He also tells them that they can keep the wealth that they had extracted, but should not do so hereafter. He also plans to tell them that what they called civilization was in fact opposite of it and declare that Indian civilization was far superior to theirs. So they should live in the country as its people lived and abstain from doing anything inconsistent to their religion. For Hindus they should give up beef and for Muslims they should renounce eating bacon and ham. He also states that he was not expressing his feelings out of some selfish fear, but because they feel it their duty to do so. He declares to them that their schools and law courts were of no use and demand that the ancient education system and judicial system be reinstated. He insists that India’s national language was Hindi so the rulers must learn it and people shall communicate with them in their own language only.

He declares that they should not spend money on railways and military. European cloth is not needed. Indians were capable of managing with the indigenous things. He also explains that,

“This is not said in arrogance. You have great military resources. Your naval power is matchless. If we wanted to fight with you on your own ground, we should be unable to do so, but if the above submissions be not acceptable to you, we cease to play the part of the ruled. You may, if you like, cut us to pieces. You may shatter us at the cannon’s mouth. If you act contrary to our will, we shall not help you; and without our help, we know you cannot move one step forward.’” (Gandhi2005:86)

He also warn them that they might take this submission lightly due to influence of power on their minds but that would prove self destructive for them. He reminds them that they both belong to lands where religion was respected, in the name of that common factor they should keep good relations. He insists that the basis of their mutual relationship must be religion.

When the reader asks for his message to the nation he replies that those who can express above views in front of Englishmen would be supposed to love nation and who believed that Indian civilization was the best one and that of Europe was a short lived thing. They should use the soul force and should not flinch before the brute
force. Even if there was a single Indian who adhered to the above said principles, the English will not neglect him.

Gandhi expressed these opinions in 1909 because the book was written then. As we have seen Gokhale expressed an unfavorable view about the book. Gandhi expressed his views about this book many times. In 1914 he says that five years have passed since publication of these views. During this period many people had discussion with me about it. My views have become more unwavering. If I find time I will be able to express my views elaborately with arguments and illustrations. (Shah, 2007) Gandhi spoke about the book again in 1921 and he wrote that his views were further strengthened and adds that,

“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. I withdraw nothing except one word of it, and that in defense to a lady friend. The booklet is a severe condemnation of ‘modern civilization.’ It was written in 1908. My conviction is deeper today than ever…” (Gandhi 2005:13)

In 1938 he revisited the book and Mahadeo Desai in the preface to 2005 edition of *Hind swaraj* wrote that, “Even in 1938 he would alter nothing in the book, except perhaps the language in some parts.”(Gandhi 2005:13) In 1945 he wrote that whatever he wrote in *Hind swaraj* has been proved true with his experiences. He is so confident about his views that he declares that even if he is the only person to believe them he did not care.

Gandhians always claim that Gandhi’s views were not static, they were dynamic. His reiteration about his firm belief in the principles he propounded in the book and vehement refusal to make any change leave no room for such claims. This book has been recognized, as we have seen earlier, dealing with his basic ideas in relation with others. His reiteration confirms that Gandhi does not feel a need to make alterations in his ideas. The ideas expressed in this book have been elaborated by Gandhi in his latter writings and speeches. It would be helpful to understand the crux of his philosophy if we pick up some threads which would form the fundamental principles of Gandhi’s political philosophy in which his nationalism is embedded. But it would be useful if we start with Gandhi’s ideas of nationalism.
Gandhi’s Concept of Nationalism:

As Nalini Pandit, a noted scholar on Gandhi, has rightly pointed out Gandhi was not a studious scholar so we do not see him stating his ideas in a theoretical frame work like Justic Rande, Tilak, M.N. Roy or Dr. Ambedkar. Though there is no dearth of his literature but that is available in the form of his articles written in his news papers, the speeches delivered by him, his interviews and representations. With an exception of some booklets we do not find Gandhi writing a full length book with sustained argument. That is why for his concept of nationalism is not available as a single whole though it is scattered throughout his literature. Here are some of his statements which give an idea as to what does nationalism mean to him.

In *young India* dated 16.03.1921 he states that,

“For me patriotism is the same as humanity. I am patriotic because I am human and humane. It is not exclusive. I will not hurt England or Germany to serve India. Imperialism has no place in my scheme of life. The law of patriot is not different from that of the patriarch. And a patriot is so much less a patriot if he is a lukewarm humanitarian. There is no conflict between private and political.” (Gandhi2011:13)

This concept of nationalism deals with the relation between two sovereign nations and expresses attitude towards others when India becomes free and an Independent sovereign nation.

On other occasion writing about nationalism he says.

“Just as the cult of patriotism teaches us today that the individual has to die for the family, the family has to die for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, and the province for the country even so a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world. My love, therefore, of nationalism or my idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole of the country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race hatred there. Let that be our nationalism.”(Gandhi2011:13)

Here he underlines importance of protecting and preserving the higher ideals like humanity and stresses the need for sacrifice by the smaller entities for upholding noble aims. Doing so he underlines importance of things like nation and humanity as
well as secondary position to individual and family. He adds that in his concept of nationalism there is no scope for animosity on the ground of race.

In *young India* Dated 18-06-1925 he writes,

“It is impossible for one to be inter-nationalist without being a nationalist. Internationalism is possible only when nationalism becomes a fact, i.e. when peoples belonging to different countries have organized themselves and are able to act as one man. It is not nationalism that is evil, it is the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. Each wants to profit at the expense of and rise on the ruin of, the other. Indian nationalism has struck a different path. It wants to organize itself or to find full self-expression for the benefit and service of humanity at large.”(Gandhi2011:14)

In this statement we see the impact of horrors created by the First World War. A hideous aspect of nationalism came to the light due to this war. During this same time effects of Russian revolution were visible all over the world. In India people like M.N.Roy had upheld that ideal and there was a school which believed nationalism to be an exclusivist and parochial idea. Rabindanath Tagore had, by then, delivered his lectures on nationalism in the United States and Japan. He also expressed a need to break the boundaries of nations and unite the whole humanity as a single unit. This is why Gandhi tries to justify that it is not a malevolent idea but the byproducts of modern nations like narrowness and selfishness have made it notorious.

In *young India* dated 04-04-1929 he states that,

“My patriotism is not an exclusive thing. It is all embracing and I should reject that patriotism which sought to mount upon the distress or exploitation of other nationalities. The conception of my patriotism is nothing if it is not always, in every case without exception, consistent with the broadest good of humanity at large. Not only that, but my religion and my patriotism derived from my religion embrace all life. I want to realize brotherhood or identity not morally with the beings called human, but I want to realize identity with all life, even with such things as crawl upon earth... because we claim descent from the same God, and that being so, all life in whatever form it appears must be essentially one.” (Gandhi2001:15)

In earlier concepts Gandhi encompasses the whole humanity in his concept of nationalism. Now not only humans but all life however base, even the insects that
creep on the ground have been included, but the stress is given on the concept of nationalism in relation with other nations. There are some more instances when Gandhi speaks about this concept but he never refers to the place the submerged sections of Indian society like peasants, labour and above all the Depress Classes would have in his concept of Nationalism. In his attempt to encompass the humanity and the whole world he overlooks the real trouble spots which would hamper the growth of Indian Nationalism.

**Conditions Before Gandhi’s Advent:**

Gandhi was active in South Africa when wrote ‘**Hind Swraj**.’ He started participating actively in the politics of freedom struggle after the exit of Tilak in 1920. Before that for almost seventy five years India was seething with different kind of activities. We have seen that the elite class had started movements in Bengal and Bombay provinces which later spread to Madras also. Apart from these movements there were movements by suppressed sections of the society like peasants, labour and lower classes. Peasants rose in revolt because their condition had become absolutely pathetic due to the unjust treatment by the colonial Government, and at the same time due to the exploitation by the zamindars and moneylenders. Famines, growth in population, changing rates of agricultural products in the international market were some more reasons their revolts.

At the middle of Nineteenth Century, Jotirao Phule emerged as a staunch leader of all the exploited. Contrary to the social tradition he started schools for women and the Untouchables. He opened the tank in his house for the untouchables whose shadow was also believed to pollute. Offered a critique of Aryan Brahminical myth, formed Satya Shodhak Samaj and submitted a memorandum to Hunter Commission, demanding drastic measures for educating the ‘Shudratishudras’ as he called the lower castes combined. He inspired many people from lower castes who joined his work.

Narayan Mseghaji Lokhade (1948-1907) an associate of Phule, needs a mention. He began his career as a clerk in railway department in Bombay and then became a store-keeper in a cotton mill. He joined Satyshodhak Samaj in 1874. The monumental task for which Lokhande is remembered is the foundation of the first union of the labourers. In early 1880 he found ‘Mill Hands Association’ which took
up the issues of labours like fixing working hours, better working conditions amongst some others. Lokhande also became the editor of ‘Din Bandhu’, the newspaper in which Phule’s famous book on conditions of peasants ‘Shetkaryacha Asud’ (Cultivator’s whipcord) was published in two installments in 1883. This was a huge upsurge against the elite centered nationalist movements and the exploitation by the Colonial Government at the same time.

There were people among the Untouchables who started critical analysis of Hindu scriptures in order to find reasons for their condition in the society. ‘Bombay Gazette’ dated 25th September 1885 report of an incident that there was a library run by Savarna Hindus in Surat. An educated Dhed (Untouchable) became its member by paying the stipulated fee. He was made to sit in the verandah to read the newspapers. The secretary of the library, a Parsi person, used to throw the newspapers and books at him from a distance in order to avoid getting polluted. One day the Dhed thought that the paid fees like any other member, he was an educated person and clean one, still those people treated me in a way worse than animal, though I observe Hindu religion. Those Hindus did not feel anything wrong in sitting beside a Muslim, Christian or Parsi persons. This generated thought process in his head and one day he told the management that as I pay fee like any other member I also have right to sit with others and read the newspapers. Seeing the determined attitude of that Dhed they were frightened, still they managed to continue with their traditional practice. On this the Dhed thought that instead of reading in such a humiliating condition, better resign the membership and he resigned. This news item was reproduced in the Times of India dated 27-08-1915 under the title “The Depressed Classes Complete Educational Question.” (Khairmode2010 Vol.i:203)

This attempt was meant to solve the problem on personal level. Organised efforts also started soon. Gopalbua Krishna Walangkar was a person who was retired from military in 1886 as a havaldar. He used to write articles in the periodicals like ‘Sudhaarak’ and ‘Din Bandhu’ He claimed that caste distinctions and Untouchability were the two monsters created by Hindus who call themselves Aryans. In 1888 he published a book entitled ‘Vilal Widhuansan’ (Demolition of pollution). In it he asked several questions to the Hindus, who called themselves, Aryans regarding caste distinctions and Untouchability and expected them or the Shankaracharya, the chief of their religion. (Khairmode2010Vol.i:205)
Shivram Janba Kamble was a person who was influenced by Walangkar. He started to serve a European at the age of ten. He read literature written by reformists in Maharashtra and later started writing articles regarding the welfare of the Untouchables. He organized a conference of Mahars from fifty one villages at Saswad in 1902. Then he wrote an application to the Government and submitted with signatures of 1588 Mahars. This was the first application to the Government by Mahar people. (Khairmode 2010 Vol. i:207)

There were many such attempts to free oneself from the clutches of caste system. The more valuable contribution came from the potentates like Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur and Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwar of Baroda. Both of them underlined the need to educate the depressed classes and made provisions to do so. They opened schools, started hostels, declared scholarships so these sections of society can take education. They did so in order to bring in a change in their lives.

In 1901 the census Commissioner tried to categories people of every province as per the belief regarding ‘social grade and precedence’ based on brahmanical model. This created restlessness among the different castes. While commenting on the situation Mani points out that,

“Livening up of the so-called ‘caste spirit’ was heightened by the hegemonic character of elitist nationalism, which had excluded, except for the rhetoric and democratic numbers game, a vast majority of Indians-lowered casts, tribal people, and Muslim masses-from the national domain.” (Mani 2008:344)

As the representation were granted under the reforms of 1909. Census commissioner in 1911 decided the population of various religions and inclusion of untouchables in Hindu religion generated a controversy. The commissioner prepared a questionnaire furnishing criteria to decide a person’s religious status. Those who were not allowed entry in temples were treated as untouchables. Hindus raised an objection to this. In order to meet the political ends Hindus started claiming them a part of their society. The elite Hindus received a shock because the Government had attached so much importance to population. They woke up to the reality. Mani describes the situation as,

“To safeguard their privileges and entrenched interests, the high caste nationals retained their dogmas and traditional values under the garb of seamless national unity and anti-colonial struggle, repudiating
the mass grievances and democratic corporations of the caste-oppressed as unpatriotic and anti-national”.
(Mani2008:344)

This is how there was a split between the Depressed Classes and the untouchables. Thus as Aloyius states, “Pre-Gandhian awakening was not only interest-based but also reflection of horizontal cleavage between the upper castes and lower caste masses in general, a cleavage that had widened as a result of colonial policies and practices.” (Aloysius2008:182)

**Political Philosophy of Gandhi:**

Gandhi’s political philosophy has been described by scholars on Gandhi to rest on three main principles. They are (1) Varnashram dharma, (2) Trusteeship and (3) Ramarijya. He upheld these principles throughout his life. *Hind swaraj* does not give details of his concept because it contained those things in seed. It would help us to know the concepts comprehensively.

**Varnashram Dharma :**

Gandhi repeatedly describes himself a Sanatani Hindu. He believes it to be his duty, as a devout Hindu, to observe Varnashram Dharma. The meaning of it, according to him was following ancestral occupations. He believed that it has been formed with an intention of spiritual welfare of the people rather than his material happiness. That is why ancestral occupation was not meant a right for making money but was a social duty. This is how everybody should look at it. About this system he states,

“I believe that every man is born in this world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation of those limitations the law of Varna was deducted. It establishes certain tendencies. This avoided unworthy competition. Whilst recognizing limitations the law of Varna admitted of no distinctions of high and low; on one hand it guaranteed to each the fruits of his labours, and on the other is prevented him from pressing upon his neighbours. This great law has been degraded and fallen into disrepute. But my conviction is that an ideal social order will only be evolved when the implications of this law are fully understood and given effect to”
(Gandhi2011:248)
On another occasion he states in young India dated 27-10-1927 that,

“Varnashram Dharma defines man’s mission on this earth. He is not born day after day to explore avenues for amassing riches and to explore different means of livelihood; on the contrary man is born in order that he may utilize every atom of his energy for the purpose of knowing his maker. It restricts him, therefore, for the purpose of holding body and soul together, to the occupation of his forefathers. That and nothing more or nothing less is Varnashram Dharma.” (Gandhi2011:248)

In Varna, according to Gandhi, Brahman would be a servant of all including shudras and the Panchams, the section which was out of the pale of Varna structure. He would devote everything for their service and depend on them for his livelihood. A Kshatriya, if he tries to obtain power and dignity for his own sake is not a Kshtriya in reality. A Vaishya, if he amasses wealth for his personal use and intends to accumulate wealth is no better than a thief. Even if a Shudra has to sell his physical energy he is not inferior in status to any of the three varnas. Gandhi Defends the Varna tenaciously but his views are not supported either by scriptures or the actual situation in the society. He reiterates that there are no distinctions of high or low involved in it, but the ground reality presents a different picture. The difference of high and low does not exist only in relation to the Brahmin and Shudras, but amongst the Brahmins also the hierarchy observed meticulously. This gave rise to the spirit of enmity between not only the two Varnas but also among two subsections of the same varna also. Commenting on this aspect of Varna Ambedkar states,

“In my province the Golak Brahmins and Chitpawan Brahmins all claim to be sub-divisions of the Brahmin Caste but the anti-social spirit that prevails between them is quite as marked and quite as virulent as the anti-social spirit that prevails between them and other Non-Brahmin castes.” (Ambedkar2013:35-36)

Here we must notice that Ambedkar has used the term caste to devote Brahmins. It is a caste as well as a Varna. In other Varnas we observed existence of several castes but the so called top Varna does not consist of many castes, they form a single caste which is divided in sub-castes, so the word which Ambedkar uses to denote it is interchangeable as far as this Varna is concerned. Ambedkar further adds,

“The ancestors of present-day English fought on one side or the other in the wars of the Roses and the
Cromwellian War. But the descendants of those who fought on the one side do not bear any animosity—any grudge against the descendents of those who fought on the other side. The feud is forgotten. But the present day non-brahmins cannot forgive present-day Brahmins for the insult their ancestors gave to Shivjai. The present-day Kayasthas will not forgive the present-day Brahmins for the infamy cast upon their forefathers by the forefathers of the latter.” (Ambedkar2013:36)

This is how Ambedkar points out that there was a feeling of superior and inferior involved in the Varna system and people observed it punctiliously.

Gandhi claims that this system was devised taking in to account limitations which are in born in some persons, which they cannot overcome and some natural tendencies. These limitations and natural tendencies were observed in the people when the Varna system was devised thousands of years ago. The problem is it is still applied to the progeny of those people for thousands of years. There is an assumption behind this theory that a person born in a particular Varna comes in the world with the qualities of that varna. Sociologists have proved this assumption wrong and cited example of a human baby lost in a jungle and brought up by animals, was found after several years. The baby had grown into a young man but it did not behave like a human being, but like an animal. They conclude that environment and upbringing mark the growth of a child. On this count Gandhi’s assumption would prove unscientific and so unacceptable. Ambedkar, on the contrary, asserts that, “A man’s power is dependent upon (1) physical heredity (2) social inheritance or endowment in the form of parental care, education, accumulation of scientific knowledge, which enables him to be more efficient than the savage, and finally (3) on his own efforts.” (Ambedkar2013:44) According to Ambedkar these are the factors which effect a man’s development, the assumption that men are born with certain qualities and they acquire their varna according to them is without base.

It is believed that the characteristics, nature, likes and dislikes of a persons are due to genetic transmission of those from generation to generation. The Varna system is based on this principle so it believes that a specific varna has been assigned a specific tasks and person belonging to it is expected to have a natural aptitude for it. But Ambedkar proclaims his disagreement with it and quotes Prof. Bateson’s views expressed in his *Mendel’s Principles of Heredity* that,
“There is nothing in the decent of the higher mental qualities to suggest that they follow any single system of transmission. It is likely that both they and the more marked developments of physical powers result rather from the coincidence of numerous factors than from the possession of any one genetic element.”

(Ambedkar2013:32-33)

Going by description of Varnasharam Dhasma given by Gandhi we feel that the people belonging to four Varnas lived amicably with equal status. As we have seen that the system was devised as a way to assign status to different sections of the society. There was hierarchy in it that became the cause to feud. Describing the intensity of the quarrels between different varnas Ambedkar states,

“How many times have the Brahmins annihilated the seed of the Kshatriya? How many times have the Kshatriyas annihilated the Brahmins? The Mahabharat and the Puranas are full incidents of the strife between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. They even quarreled over such petty questions as to who should salute first, as to who should give way first, the Brahmins or the Kshatriyas, when the two meet in the street. Not only was the Brahmin an eyesore to the Kshatriya and the Kshatriya an eyesore to the Brahmin, it seems that the Kshatriyas had become tyrannical and the masses, disarmed as they were under the system of Chaturvarnya, were praying Almighty God for relief from their tyranny. The Bhagwat tells us very definitely that Krishna had taken Avtar for one sacred purpose and that was to annihilate the Kshatriyas.”(Ambedkar2013:52-53)

This was nothing but a competition between the different Varnas. Gandhi’s assertion that Varna system has helped in avoiding completion does not seem to be based on reality when we observe the above mentioned facts.

As a devout Hindu Gandhi takes initiative in protecting cow. In Hind Swaraj he states that, “I myself respect the cow, that is, I look upon her with affectionate reverence. The cow is the protector of India because, being an agricultural country, she is dependent on the cow. The cow is a most useful animal in hundreds of ways.” (Gandhi2005:44) He feels cow protection such an important duty of a Hindu that the rest of the marks like tilak and chanting of mantra, going to pilgrimages or observing the rules of caste steadfastly are not the parameters to judge a Hindu but his work in the direction of cow protection would be the basis of it. Gandhi also compares the
cow with mother and states that it is superior compared to our mother. He writes in *Harijan* Dated 15-09-1940 that,

“Mother cow is in many ways better than the mother who gave us birth. Our mother gives us milk for a couple of years and then expects from us to serve her when we grow up. Mother cow expects from us nothing but grass and grain. Our mother often falls ill and expects service from us. Mother cow rarely falls ill. Hers is an unbroken record of service which does not end with her death. Our mother when she dies means expenses of burial or cremation. Mother cow is as useful dead as when she is alive. We can make use of every part of her body—her flesh, her bones, her intestines, her horns, and her skin. Well I say this not to disparage the mother who gives us birth, but in order to show you the substantial reasons for my worshipping cow.” (Gandhi2011:127-128)

Though he worships the cow, he is aware that there are Indians who consume cow’s meat in their regular diet. Muslims form a predominant section of the society though there are Hindus belonging to lower castes and Christians who share this food culture. Gandhi was faced with a question of saving either the cow or the Muslim who is about to kill a cow. He said that He reveres the cow but at the same time he respects human beings also. In order to save a cow killing a human being, even if he is a Muslim, was unacceptable to him. He suggested that rather he would fall at the feet of the person who intends to kill a cow and beg him to save it.

He also adds that Muslims kill cow but Hindus are not behind in ill treating cow. This ill treatment to the cow by Hindus is nothing short of killing for him. He also accepts that many among the Hindus share the culture of beef eating. Gandhi calls them as they are not followers of *Ahimnsa* as the Muslims do. He also adds that cow-protection societies were to be considered as a ‘disgrace’ to the society and ridicules them as cow-killing societies.

In spite of this he took initiative in the founding of All-India Cow Protection Society. This was a move, according to Aloysius, to take the wind out of the sails of the Hindu Mahashabha.

**Trusteeship:**

Trustee ship was another important principle which occupied a central position in Gandhi’s political philosophy. This is a part of his economic thought. His economic
thought has evolved gradually. Struggles between the land lords and peasants were growing fiercer in India. If one expects that the common masses to join the movement the workers of that organization should strive to eradicate their problems was Gandhi’s view. When the struggles between peasants and landlords, mill owner and worker became more intense Gandhi tried to find a solution in non-violent manner. He believed in the change of heart and he used this method to transform the mill owners. He had fears that if the means of production were nationalized the economic and political power go into the hands of a few people, that would cause harm to individual freedom. So in order to put an end to the exploitation Gandhi put forth the concept of trusteeship a non-violent alternative to nationalization.

The roots of the concept of trusteeship could be traced in Puritanism. They believe that everything in the world belong o God. Human beings have been given only substance. The success a person achieves in his business is a mark of his mercy. They thought it a sin to use this wealth for one’s own self. Gandhi imagined Daridryanarayana in place of God. He told the rich that their wealth belonged to the society and develop a feeling that they are only trustees to it. They should only spend to fulfill their minimum needs from that wealth and use the rest for the welfare of the society. At the time of strike of mill workers in Ahmeadabad he took a position that the mill owners and the workers are the members of a family, the workers should treat the owners as father while putting forth their demands, where as the owners should look-after the welfare of the workers. He also suggested that instead of resorting to strikes they should sort out their disputes amicably.

In Harijan dated 03-06-1939 Gandhi writes that

“Suppose I have come by a fair amount of wealth-either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry, I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me, what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. I enunciate this theory when the socialist theory was placed before the country in respect to the possessions held by zamindars and ruling chiefs. They would do away with these privilege classes. I want them to outgrow their greed and sense of possession, and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour. The labourer has to realize that the wealthy man is less owner of his
wealth than the labour is owner of his own, viz. the power to work.” (Gandhi 2011:5)

After propounding the theory of the idea, Gandhi turns to its practical side. The theory is idealistic in nature, so selection of trustees and their number was an important point which needed to be elaborated. On that Gandhi states that,

“The question how many can be real trustees according to this definition is beside the point. If the theory is true, it is immaterial whether many live up to it or only one man lives up to it. The question is of conviction. If you accept the principle of Ahimsa, you have to strive to live up to it, no matter whether you succeed or fail. There is nothing in this theory which can be said to be beyond the grasp of intellect, though you may say it is difficult of practice.” (Gandhi 2011:66)

This way he settles the issue.

Gandhi advocated in favour of economic equality and his definition of economic equality was to abolish the eternal conflict between capital and labour. He also states that economic equality does not mean that everybody in the society should possess equal wealth. But rather everybody should have enough to fulfill his needs. He states,

“I am no Socialist and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possession; but I do say that, personally, those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this rule. I do not want to dispossess anybody. I should then be departing from the rule of Ahimsa. If somebody else possesses more than I do, let him. But so far as my own life has to be regulated, I do say that I dare not possess anything which I do not want.” (Gandhi 2011:3)

It is generally observed that men are reluctant to part with their possessions. Unless and until there is some legal binding to make it mandatory wealthy people would not let others enjoy their wealth. Gandhi does not lay down any such obligation for the propertied class. He has left it to their will and if such matters were left to those people it was an alternative method of protecting their interests. While remarking on the idea of trusteeship Ambedkar states,

“Gandhi does not wish to hurt the propertied class. He is even opposed to a campaign against them. He has no passion for economic equality. Referring to the propertied class Mr. Gandhi said quite recently that
he does not wish to destroy the hen that lays golden egg. His solution to the economic conflict between the owners and the workers, between the rich and the poor, between landlords and tenants and between the employers and the employees is very simple. The owners need not deprive themselves of their property. All that they need do is to declare themselves Trustees for the poor. Of course the trust is to be a volunteer one carrying only a spiritual Obligation.”(BAWS1991Vol.ix:282)

**Ramrajya:**

Gandhi called himself an anarchist. Opposition to state system, self rule free from any external restrictions, social system based on justice, morality, co-operation and fraternity were some ideas he borrowed from the anarchists. It was the belief of the anarchists that when the poverty comes to an end and a situation is created in which basic needs of people could be easily fulfilled; the struggle between human beings would automatically come to end. The age old village system in India enjoyed autonomy and self sufficiency. It depends on natural division of labour and co-operation between peasant and artisans. Gandhi believed that if one removes the flaws which have entered into it during modern times and restructures it, this system could prove a good foundation for state free society in India. He expected each village to be self sufficient as well as autonomous. It should be so prepared that it should protect itself against external aggression. Individual would be the basic constituent of the society system. Gandhi expected that the life in this system would not be like a pyramid placing are upon another but would be parallel to each other. There individual would devote himself for village, village would devote itself to the province and so on. In this way life would be integrated. People there would not be egocentric and aggressive but they would be humble. This ideal social system is called by Gandhi as Ramrajya.

**Gandhi’s oppose to Modern Institutions:**

In *Hind Swraj* Gandhi express his dislike for many modern institutions which are related to the arrival of Englishmen. He believes that they form a part of their civilization and are out of place in India. He points out the harm these things caused to India
1. **Railway:**

Gandhi is of the opinion that the railways have helped the Britishers to tighten their grip on India firmly. For them they have facilitated administrational ease. Due to lack of means of transportation, earlier, people moved from place to place exceptionally, this caused natural segregation. Due to advent of railways people found it easy to travel and they started making use of it. This broke the segregation. Gandhi believes that due to this diseases like Plague have spread with people. He holds railways responsible for this. He states that earlier only devolved people visited places of pilgrimage, due to railways anybody started visiting these places, they have been spoiled by thieves and immoral people now.

Though Gandhi had this adverse opinion about the railways he made an exhaustive use of it and travelled throughout India using railways and did not have any problem because of it. His opposition to railways implies an ulterior motive of preserving the social structure as it faced a serious challenge due to the facility of transportation. The first casualty would be the caste system which he tried to protect with all his might. The railways would carry people to towns where they could find alternative to their hereditary occupations.

2. **Lawyers:**

Gandhi himself was a lawyer and practiced for a brief period in Bombay and for some time in South Africa. Though this is the case he had an adverse opinion about this profession. He held this opinion on moral ground. He believed that the profession thrives on immorality and adversity. According to him there is no need to settle the dispute between the two parties. Those parties themselves should resolve the dispute either by fighting or amicably sitting together. He adds that the former is a savage way so the only manly way is the latter one. Seeking assistance of a lawyer and court is absolutely unmanly for him.

When he express dislike for this system he also says that it has helped to strengthen the grip of English people on India and believes that without courts and lawyers they cannot be in a position to hold India for long.

The Natural question arise is if Gandhi hated the judicial system then what alternative does he suggest? Gandhi gives a plain answer to this and advocates for the ancient Indian judicial system. He says that justice was within the capacity of all and the judgments were delivered by sitting together. In fact though it looked so simple
and appealing this system was not judicious because its basis was formed by caste. Caste Panchyats were formed to sort out the disputes among the castes. The law varied from caste to caste. Brahmin used to get away with a mild punishment for a serious crime where as a lower caste persons were given severe punishment for minor offences. Ancient Indian judicial system was so injudicious that, as we have seen earlier even the rates of interests were varying from Varna to varna. The rates were injudicious as they were highest for lower varnas engaged in occupations giving very low income and very low or nominal rates for the upper varnas. This shows that Gandhi’s admiration for ancient Hindu judicial system was not properly placed.

3) **Doctors:**

Doctor is an institution which attracts Gandhi’s wrath. He believed that men fall ill because of not observation moderation in their lives. He gives example of over eating that causes upset stomach or indigestion. Doctors prescribe medicines and the person is cured. This, according to Gandhi encourages indulgence and instead of obtaining from over eating he starts doing it without fear, because he knows that the doctor would cure him. This is now people become immoral due to doctors.

Although Gandhi severely condemn medical profession and expected others to denounce seeking help of doctors but for him the rules were different. As Mani states,

“He (Gandhi) frequently rode in railway trains and motor cars, and was a willing victim to what he termed ‘medical tyranny’ for most of his life. For example, he gave his consent to have operated upon for appendicitis in 1924, and was at all times an ideal patient under the safe care of allopathic physicians.”(Mani2008:387)

Dr. Sadanand More has also endorsed this fact. He states that while Gandhi was in Yerwada prison he suffered from severe pain due to appendicitis. As pain started he was admitted in hospital where Colonel Dr. Medock performed surgery successfully, that to in the light of lantern because all of a sudden lights went off during the surgery. (More2007:730-731)

4) **Machinery:**

Gandhi condemns the machines severely. We generally believe that the mills were an alternative for the unemployed in the villages. Contrary to the universal
opinion Gandhi believes that India was impoverished due to machines. It is his theory that machines encourage urbanization and it is the cause of many evils. Gandhi compares it with ‘snake hole’ which contain multiple hazards. He believed that money makes man helpless. Sexual vice also springs from urbanization and it is even worse than snake bite according to Gandhi.

Gandhi’s insistence on demachinization was compatible with his idea of village Swraj because that would uphold the age old system of ancestral occupations. If the society accepts this mode of production it would perpetuate caste system but existence of caste system is incompatible to democracy so that would be detrimental.

**Gandhi on Education:**

The reader asked Gandhi about Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwar’s scheme of making education compulsory in his state. Replying to it he states that if one believed in the supremacy of Indian civilization such initiatives would be of no avail. He appreciated the efforts of the Maharaja but believed that the effects of such schemes would not be essentially good. He states that education means only knowledge of alphabets. This would prove to be a means of exploitation of other people. Gandhi states that the peasants in India have wisdom to behave with people around them and that is enough. He candidly declares that,

“What do you propose to do by giving him a knowledge of letters? Will you add an inch to his happiness? Do you wish to make him discontented with his cottage or his lot? And even if you want to do that, he will not need such education.”(Gandhi2005:76)

Equally vehemently he states that even though he had not taken any education, he would not have felt that his life has been wasted because of lack of education. At the same time he makes it clear that he did not rule out knowledge of alphabets completely but desisted overemphasis on it. He does not feel a need for compulsory education and asserts that age old system of education was sufficient and adds that the fundamental aim of primary education should be to mould the character of the learners.

Though he says so in the beginning, we observe a change in his views on education later on, in spite of his repeated insistence that he there is no need to
make changes in his outlook. He developed an education system according to his ideas with the help of his colleagues in the Congress. It was known as ‘Basic Education’. Gandhi’s thoughts were influenced by Indian as well as western thinkers. Indian influences were obvious from the opinions he expresses time to time. About Western influences Fagg says,

“Ruskin and Tolstoy apart, Gandhi read a large number of other nineteenth-century Western critics of modern civilization-among them Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), Ralf Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Robert Sherard (1861-1943). Although no direct link can be made with Gandhi’s thoughts on education, the understanding that Gandhi gleaned from such writers naturally informed his own critique of Western values and helped him to consolidate his own views on society as a whole. This is important since the interrelationship between schooling and society is of course intimate, and even more so in Gandhi’s scheme which virtually converts the school into a microcosm of society itself.” (Fagg2011:39)

**Gandhi and Inequality:**

While discussing Gandhi’s idea of trusteeship we have seen that though Gandhi believes in equality in economic field he does not want to take away from those who possess in excessive quantity. This leaves a very wide gulf between the rich and the poor which he did not denounce. So Dasgupta states, “How wide the gulf between rich and poor would have to be before it becomes morally unacceptable is a question that Gandhi never attempted to answer precisely but he provided some clues.” (Dasgupta2003:91)

Gandhi asserted that the disparity between the landlords and the peasants was not acceptable to him at all. At the same time when permanent settlement, aimed at ending this inequality, Gandhi stood in opposition of complete abolition of Zamindari system.

Gandhi was against untouchability is clear from the programmes he declared. He even refused to believe the scriptures as far as this issue was concerned. Untouchability was only manifestation of caste system was the fact he seems to overlook. Only eradication of untouchability would not solve the problem. Dasgupta describes Gandhi’s attitude in this case as,
“Gandhi did not, however, attack the caste system as such with quite the same fever which he brought to his fight against the theory and practice of Untouchability. For this reason he has been accused of being an apologist for caste distractions. In my judgment the accusation is incorrect but Gandhi himself bears some responsibility for making it appear plausible.” (Dasgupta2003:100-101)

He adds that Gandhi’s attempts to distinguish varna from caste was also caused suspicion about his views.

**Gandhi and Gender Inequality:**

Gandhi expressed his dislike for child marriage, young widowhood, widower husband getting married soon, ill treatment of wives, dowry system and such traditions which placed women in a disadvantaged position in the society. But at the same time he believed that these are not the problems before Indian society only. According to him they existed in every country and every society.

He expected that women should become active and self-conscious for changing the situation which would facilitate their entry into political field. He also asserts that physically observing there is no weakness that women suffer from. Still he believes that areas of work assigned for men and women are different, and says that it was the duty of women to take care of children and home. Dasgupta states that according to Gandhi, “There was a natural division of labour by gender. The father was meant to be the bread winner while it was the women’s work to bring up her little-ones and mould their character.” (Dasgupta2003:111) In Hind Swraj Gandhi expresses his dislike for women joining the work force. While describing the effect of western civilization he refers to them and also while describing the evils of industrialization in India points it out. This view was not out of sympathy for women but in order to preserve the old tradition. So Dasgupta states,

“There is a basic ambiguity in Gandhi’s writings on women’s role in the work place. The proposition that for a woman the home is the work place forms the cornerstone of the traditional view of women’s role in society.” (Dasgupta2003:113)

This dichotomy in Gandhi’s thought percolated in other areas also. Though he showed his sympathy to the peasants against land lords he states,
“The kisan Movement must be confined to the improvement of the status of the kisans and the betterment of the relations between the zamindars and them… and scrupulously abide the terms of their agreement with the zamindars whether such agreement is written or inferred from custom.” (Aloysius2008:205)

Same is the case with eradication of Untouchability and we have seen it in the writings of Ambedkar. His movement for temple entry also miserably failed though he claimed it to be a success. Schools in Gandhi’s Gujrat were closed for the untouchable students and not a single temple was opened for the Untouchables. This indicates that Gandhi’s nationalism stood on the foundation of age old social system in which he wanted to bring a marginal change but at the same time he was cautious to avoid wrath from privileged class.
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