Chapter - V

DEMOCRACY AS VISUALISED

BY GANDHI
Gandhi was the symbol of spiritual power in socio-political life. In Swami Vivekananda he got a new booster. Swami Vivekananda was among those great people who breathed new life into the spirit of India. Like many of our great political leaders Gandhi was also tremendously influenced by the life, ideas, beliefs and the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, which had a deep impact on him. The nature of Vivekananda’s influence on our political leaders is evident from his Biography written by Romain Rolland. Gandhi visited Ramakrishna Math in Belur in 1921 when he came to participate in the Congress session. Gandhi, while addressing the people there, said that he came to visit Belur Math not for the purpose of preaching Satyagraha, but to be inspired by the place where Swami Vivekananda lived so that he could love his nation more deeply. He said that his love for India increased a thousand times after reading Vivekananda and said to the people that they should carry some amount of that inspiration with them while going back home. This shows how much respectful Gandhi was to Swami Vivekananda.¹

Gandhi believed in human unity. He obtained this idea from Advaita Vedānta as explained by Swami Vivekananda. Following Vivekananda, Romain Rolland writes, Vedānta speaks of Advaita which means ‘Non-Dualism, Unity, the idea of the Absolute, of the Impersonal God.’² Vivekananda also emphasises ‘Unity is the test of truth. Everything that makes for Oneness is truth. Love is truth, and hatred is false, because hatred makes for multiplicity. It is a disintegrating power.’³

The actual essence of Hinduism for Gandhi was advaita, the philosophy of unity of all life, manifesting the spark of one and the same divine source. This faith in the unity of man led Gandhi to adopt non-violence which, according to him, is not only means but also the goal, that is, the attainment of truth (SATYA IS AHIMSA). Through non-violence he prevents the wrong doer from doing wrong. Since non-violence is bereft of hatred it changes his heart and thereby generates love in him and makes him believe that ‘love is truth’. Like Vivekananda Gandhi also believes that no man is essentially bad because we are the children of Bliss (‘AMRITASYA PUTRA’).
Gandhi sought truth (satyam) for purposive and integral welfare of humanity (shivam), and upheld goodness as supreme beauty (sundaram). This concept of Gandhi is comparable to Plato’s conception of justice in the Republic. Plato believed beauty, truth and goodness to be the highest form of manifestation in human life. Goodness embodying beauty and truth is regarded by Plato as the demiurge or the principle of creation underlying everything in the mortal world. An intrinsic unity of truth, beauty and goodness stands for justice in Plato’s ideal state. Similarly the Vedic ideal of Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram meaningfully conveyed the Gandhian symbolism of swaraj. In Gandhian swaraj, a seeker after truth identified himself with his fellow-beings and sought to attain the bliss epitomized in commonweal and collective effort.

In Gandhi’s opinion the different groups in the society should have the capacity of taking decisions in their own affairs. Gandhi understood this and so he used the word swaraj instead of ‘independence’. Swaraj literally means ‘self-rule’ and its original connotation is autonomy of the moral self (as in the Brhadāranyaka Upanishad) where strict control is exercised over the senses. “It is, therefore, not out of expedience that I oppose independence as my goal. I want India to come to her own and that state cannot be better defined by any single word than ‘swaraj’.

‘Swaraj’ means rule of the internally invigourated people seeking self-sufficiency and this self-sufficiency is to be developed from the grass-root level. It needs the participation of each and every individual.

“Let there be no mistake about my conception of Swaraj... at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic... It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is dharma, i.e. religion in the highest sense of the term... Let us call this the square of Swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue.”

Swaraj, in Gandhian vision, is as much inward as outward. Political self-government of the people, in Gandhi’s view, is not merely external, but also internal. It is the ‘inward freedom’ of the individuals. It is a process of “reform from within,” striving for self-perfection through rigorous self-discipline. It has
been conceptualized by Gandhi as a philosophy as well as a strategy of total transformation and emancipation. Swarāj is the summun bonum of Gandhian philosophy.

'Swarāj' does not mean freedom from restraint, but self-restraint and self-rule. Individuals as well as nations are potentially capable of self-rule and so, in Gandhi's view, "political is no better than individual self-government". Political self-government is attainable "by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule."9 Swarāj begins at the individual level and touches the various spheres of life— it gradually permeates into the life of the entire nation. Swarāj for a nation is thus "the sum-total of the Swarāj of individuals comprising the nation. And such Swarāj comes only from performance by individuals of their duty as citizens."10

Gandhi believed that the aspiration for self-government is the moral duty (dharma) of the individual as well as the nation. An individual who is conscious of his duties will not succumb to the tyranny of circumstance or system and dedicate himself to the ideal ends.11 ‘And, a nation comprising of such individuals will have swarāj as an inalienable right, axiomatically.’12 And so Gandhi regards individual swarāj as a corollary of national swarāj. He viewed struggle for swarāj as a dharma yuddha (a righteous war) and it was the righteous duty of the common masses to participate in it. So the Indian freedom movement was a step towards the attainment of Purna Swarāj. The Indian freedom movement attained a new dimension by the concept of Purna Swarāj. It was marked by the participation of large number of masses. "The true hallmark of swarāj of Gandhi's vision, therefore, would be self-rule by the millions."13

Gandhi believed that oppression cannot be continued without the tacit consent of the oppressed. So it was the moral duty of the people to rise against oppression but through non-violence. Swarāj meant more than political independence and formal democracy. Political independence was necessary for Purna Swarāj. Purna Swarāj meant the all round development of all the people or sarvodaya. Swarāj
was not merely political independence but also freedom from social, economic and political oppression. Swarāj stood for a complete transformation.

In Gandhi’s view, “Swarāj is an all satisfying goal for all time... our goal at any rate may be known by an indigenous word understood by the three hundred millions. And we have such a word in Swarāj first used in the name of the nation by Dadabhai Naoroji. It is infinitely greater than and includes independence. It is a vital word. It has been sanctified by the noble sacrifices of thousands of Indians. It is a word which, if it has not penetrated the remotest corners of India, has at least got the largest currency than any similar word.”14 Swarāj meant the mobilization of the entire physical, economic and spiritual resources of all people in the service of the common good of all.15

In 1924, he wrote: “Swarāj for me means freedom for the meanest of our countrymen...”16 It is not merely self-government or freedom in the political sense. In 1925 Gandhi wrote: “By Swarāj I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having registered their names as voters... real Swarāj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, Swarāj is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.”17 On another occasion he wrote: “The Swarāj of my dream is the poor man’s Swarāj. The necessaries of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by the princes and the moneyed man.18 On the eve of his voyage to England in 1931, he said: “It has been said that Indian Swarāj will be the rule of the majority community, i.e. the Hindus. There could not be greater mistake than that ... Hind Swarāj is the rule of all the people, is the rule of justice...”19 Gandhi pleaded for a multi-class approach and an all-inclusive Swarāj composed of all classes. His Swarāj was not being partial to some or prejudicial to others.20 It was more of the nature of a feeling of solidarity and identification with the masses.
In the political sphere democracy is the idea of participation by the whole community in the political process. It bases political authority on the will of individuals who by a process of co-operation make decisions that are binding on all. But democracy, to Gandhi, is not so much a form as a principle of government, and not only a principle of government, but a principle of social life. It is a way of life. Gandhi considered democracy from the standpoint of that larger principle of social life. He criticized those forms of government which were democratic in their institutional basis and political form, but from the philosophical standpoint were negations of democracy. Institutional framework of democracy does not guarantee power to the people, "Democracy is an impossible thing until the power is shared by all... Even a pariah; a labourer... will have his share in self-government." The essence of democracy in his view is that every person represents all the varied interests which compose the nation. He wanted the state "to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate them or force them to do its will."

Gandhi regarded the individual as the centre of authority and value. "Ultimately it is the individual which is the unit." For the full growth and progress of the individual a democratic society must have its basis in rational understanding, mutual cooperation and concern for the well-being of all. He held that the state and government derive their existence and power from the individuals. The Gandhian theory of equality was rooted in his basic faith in the dignity of the individual. His theory of equality of all was based on his belief that "We are all equal before our Maker— Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis, Christians, worshippers of one God."

He insisted that the individual should be the basic unit of the decentralized democratic political structure. However this individual is not an isolated but interacting and participating human being with an open mind willing to help the world as also depend on the world, "I hold that democracy cannot be evolved by forcible method. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. The spirit of democracy cannot be imposed from without. It has to come from within." Thus,
such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants.

Bertrand Russell in his book *Political Ideas* stated that the present institutions rest upon two things—property and power. In Hobbes' view the pursuit of power is the basic human characteristic. He stated that man seeks power to have control over others for his self-preservation being apprehensive of danger from all sources. Russell holds that the main problem is that property and power are very unjustly distributed though they are of great importance to promote the happiness of the individual.

Gandhi was against the abuse of power. By emphasizing the need of diffusion of power in the political-economic sphere, he wanted to bring in a new socio-politico-economic order. He gave a new interpretation to the concept of power. He said, "To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life, political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives..."

Gandhi tried to challenge the very notion of power, which is of great importance in the modern world. He was against the increase of power of the state. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. "I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear because, although while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of progress." The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. He was against any organization based on violence and was against the coercive character of the state.

It was for this reason that Gandhi was against the Western interpretation of liberal and socialist democracies as both stood for power. Modern state, to Gandhi, is like a soulless machine. There cannot be true democracy in modern state. True democracy can prevail only in a society which is based on two basic principles—
(1) Sovereignty of the people is accepted in true democracy. There should be a widespread recognition that power emanates from people.

(2) Man is a self-determining moral agent capable of conducting his own affairs. True democracy promotes this feeling in man.

A policy-or government in order to be democratic should be organised in a way so that the people are encouraged to take decisions for themselves. Liberal democratic state, to Gandhi, is anti-democratic because in a liberal democratic state power is usurped by the government. Secondly, in a liberal democratic state there is a list of political rights and freedom given to the people as a gift. So the basic conviction that people are the source of power is denied. Thirdly, this gift is extended to the people because they are citizens of the state. To Gandhi, man is a citizen but that is not his primary identity. His primary identity is as a social and moral being.

In a socialist democracy too, the party leadership, and not the people, is the ultimate decision maker. The leadership is identified with the state machinery and they have a privileged position. In a socialist society people become gradually accustomed to the elementary rule of social life and become prey to the apparatus of the state and thus democracy itself begins to wither away.

Gandhi held that when the power is superimposed, it needs always the help of police and military. But the power generated from within should have no use of them. \(^{30}\) Gandhi maintains that if the individuals could recognise the power in their hands and use it constructively to secure the social good or engage in non-violent resistance against the unjust measures of the state, the monopoly of state power would be reduced and its coercive authority would be morally and materially undermined. So the purification of power politics becomes possible.

So he emphasized on non-violence and truth which will result in weakening the coercive role of the state. Non-violence must be used to influence power politics without succumbing to its corrupting influence, but the moment non-violence assumes political power, it contradicts itself and becomes contaminated. \(^{31}\)
Satyagraha stands for non-violent resistance. Non-violent resistance is active resistance which is expressed not through violence, but through the active force of love, faith and sacrifice. "This threefold energy is expressed in the word Satyagraha." According to Gandhi, "without ahimsa it is not possible to seek and find truth. Ahimsa and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them... Nevertheless, ahimsa is the means, Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our reach, and so ahimsa is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later. When once we have grasped this point, final victory is beyond question.""33

Means and ends are convertible in Gandhi's philosophy. Non-violence is embedded in truth and vice versa. This concept of the convertibility of ends and means has been extended by Gandhi to the sphere of socio-political matters. "If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself." To him, "the attempt made to win Swaraj is Swaraj itself." So he stressed on perfecting the means to attain the goal. Gandhi's insistence on non-violent means to achieve freedom for the country can only be understood and appreciated in the background of this ends—means relationship.

In order that truth and ahimsa must incarnate in socialism, a living faith in God is essential. Truth is God. It is impossible to reach Him, that is, Truth, except through Love. Mere mechanical adherence to ahimsa is likely to break down. In his opinion, Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral.

Gandhi held that true democracy is based on truth and non-violence. So no perfect democracy is possible without perfect non-violence behind it. True democracy attempts to replace force and violence by social will. "In democracy, the individual will was governed and limited by the social will which was the state, which was governed by and for democracy." Perfect democracy is possible only when there is perfect non-violence. The modern states became totalitarian and if they want to become democratic they must truly and courageously become
non-violent. The basic principle of non-violence is human love, to seek one's good in the good of all and sacrificing one's life to realise the ideal.

The voluntary efforts of the individual is necessary for the flourishing of the spirit of democracy. Gandhi says that true democracy or the Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition, through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated ahimsa.

Non-violence, for Gandhi, is not a mere experiment but a part of his life and the whole of the creed of satyagraha, non cooperation, civil disobedience necessarily follow from the fundamental proposition that non-violence is the law of life for human beings. "For me it is both a means and an end and I am more than ever convinced that in the complex situation that faces India, there is no other way of gaining real freedom. In applying my mind to the present situation I must, therefore, test everything in terms of non-violence."

Non-violent non-cooperation may be the best and perhaps the only method of bringing about the change of mind and heart which will make acceptance of a federal democratic constitution by the nation possible. Without the recognition of non-violence on a national scale there is no such thing as a constitutional or democratic government.

He argued that a non-violent state "must be broad-based on the will of an intelligent people, well able to know its mind and act up to it." He believed that a non-violent system of government is an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persist. "My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. That can never happen except through non-violence." Inequality arises out of an attachment to private property and to power which is a form of himsa. As long as the himsa of attachment to property in a society is not removed, the himsa of
attachment by the State to coercive power cannot be reduced let alone eliminated.\textsuperscript{47}

Gandhi believed that just as in a non-violent State the general will is expressed in the absence of every form of coercion (however subtle), in a non-violent society also, there could be no exploitation. "A society or nation constructed non-violently must be able to withstand attack upon its structure from without or within.\textsuperscript{48} A true democrat relies, not on the arms his State could flaunt in the face of the world, but on the moral force that his state could put at the disposal of the world.\textsuperscript{49}

Gandhi advocated decentralized democracy with the least centralization and a non-violent state with an economic structure based on small-scale and cottage industries. Centralization as a system is inconsistent with non-violent structure of society.\textsuperscript{50} In his view centralization paves the way for exploitation of the individual materially and intellectually and exploitation is treated by Gandhi as part and parcel of violence. Centralized authority destroys individuality which is the root of all progress. In view of the nature of state which retards individual initiative, Gandhi advocated decentralized type of democracy followed by the self-governing and self-sufficient village republics. The society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in his opinion, is not possible without a living belief in God. The ultimate end of the non-violent state is to advance "the greatest good of all." 'It is only when democracy relies on the people and the rule by the people through the politics of convincing, persuasion without depending on the military or police power, it becomes truly a decentralized democracy.'\textsuperscript{51} Because centralization cannot be sustained without adequate force,\textsuperscript{52} it is the decentralized democracy which is consistent with non-violence as it governs the least and no violence or force is needed.

A democratic government must devolve its real power to people in the political and economic spheres. If the power does not remain at the working base, it will only be deceptive but cannot be termed as a real democracy. Gandhi emphasized on individual effort, local reform and village centred activity. Decentralized democracy, in his view, will increase individual freedom and initiative. It will produce real freedom and ensure equality and there will be no place for state

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power and violence in it. He held that a nation is truly democratic when it runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much interference of the state.53

Real democracy, in his view, could not be built from top to bottom but from ‘bottom upwards’. He wanted to build up an organisation which has its basis on decentralized villages, industries and self-sufficient rural communities. This decentralized structure will be composed of innumerable villages in which there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. The personalized structure of decentralized system is best expressed by the organizational principle of Oceanic Circles. “Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.”54 “Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it.”55 The Oceanic Circle model of decentralized democracy seeks to reinstate the demos, who become powerless in a centralized state apparatus. Gandhi thus seeks to set right the ‘inverted pyramid’ of the Western democratic system.

Gandhi was in favour of the freedom of the people who are being ruled. People’s independence, according to him, should begin from the bottom, that is, from village level. ‘Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without...’56

The development has to begin from the bottom, i.e., village level. If the country is to be revived, her roots have to be tended which lie in the village. This programme has to be initiated by the people themselves with proper understanding.
Gandhi was in favour of equal participation which is better ensured in a decentralized participative structure. The decentralized system of Panchayats will be 'people's rule' in the true sense. Panchayat Raj means a political structure with its base at the village level consisting of 5 members comprised of elders, statesmen of the community with the functional ability of legislature, executive and judiciary. The panchayat will be elected by all the adult members of the village. This process of political participation would make the citizens feel responsible for their political actions as well as for the consequences.

Gandhi believed democratic structure to be more 'inclusive'. "...Under democracy individual liberty or opinion and action is jealously guarded... What we want, I hope, is a government not based on coercion even of a minority but on its conversion."57 The panchayats and the decentralized political institutions should have a positive and constructive role in the economic, social as well as political spheres.

Personal Swaraj, in Gandhi's view, should be the pre-condition of genuine democracy. Personal Swaraj implies self-discipline for both the rulers and the ruled. It also implies 'reform from within' which means inward freedom. Self-government, thus "depends entirely upon our internal strength, upon our ability to fight against the heaviest odds."58

True democracy or genuine swaraj is marked by freedom from fear and coercion in every sphere of life—social, political, economic and at all levels—individual, national and global. In the democracy that Gandhi had envisaged there will be equal freedom for all where everybody will be his own master.

The ultimate criterion of human development is Swaraj in Gandhi's view. Swaraj is as much 'inward' as 'outward' and as much 'individual' as 'national' in the politico-economic sense. Swaraj is a vision of emancipation of the individual, the nation and also the world. It is not merely freedom from the imperialist yoke, it implies freedom from exploitation, social evils, violence, injustice, inequality. Swaraj is a broad-spectrum concept. It includes self-
government, substantive democracy, non-violent order, decentralized-humanized economy, sarvodaya and globalism. Thus it touches various aspects, levels and situations in an integrated perspective.

Political Swaraj would be incomplete without economic Swaraj. The essence of economic Swaraj is equality, justice, space for individual creativity and non-violence. Since economic inequality is the basis of non-violence, eradication of inequalities through non-violent means is essential for economic Swaraj. So he stressed on economic restructuring. Gandhi aimed at transforming the socio-cultural and economic situation. Thus he emphasized on constructive programme to be pursued parallelly with the independence movement. Involvement of the people free from any kind of social or political coercion in the constructive programme was the basis of the democratic political structure. Constructive work is for him [non-violent man] what arms are for the violent men. The objective of the constructive work organizations is to generate political power, not to capture it.

The first and foremost item of this social reform was the removal of untouchability. Untouchability is against the spirit of democracy, which implies absence of distinction between citizens. In this respect Gandhi seems to have been very much influenced by Swami Vivekananda. Gandhi set up an organization, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, which was to work for the removal of all their disabilities. He included service of women in the constructive programme. With his belief in non-violence, Gandhi was against all types of inequality in any walk of life, political, economic and social. He believed that inequality ultimately leads to exploitation, which for him, was violence. He was against the pernicious system of child marriage and the dowry system and all social and religious barriers to widow remarriage. He was against the purdah system too. He believed that to interfere with the free growth of womanhood in India is to interfere with the growth of free and independent spirited men. He invited the women of India to participate in Satyagraha not only because they were equal to men but also because they possessed virtues which made them superior to men in a non-violent fight.
which requires infinite patience and silent suffering without complain. Gandhi wanted India to be free from the evil of the use of intoxicating drinks and drugs.

Gandhi’s educational reform was the most radical. He wanted to combine learning with doing socially useful work. This system of basic education was called Nai Talim by Gandhi. The additional item in the constructive programme was the education of the voters. It is popular and total political education which informs the people about their rights and obligations in a democracy. The people must be educated to vote with a view to the public good.

Economic Swaraj in the Gandhian context cannot be clearly understood without reference to equality. By the implication ‘equal distribution’ Gandhi meant that each man shall have the supply of the basic needs and nothing more than that. He said— Everyone must have a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of his children and adequate medical relief. Economic equality must never be supposed to mean possession of an equal amount of worldly goods by everyone. It does not mean, however, that every one will have a proper house to live in, sufficient and balanced food to eat, and sufficient khadi with which to cover himself. It also means that the cruel inequality that obtains today will be removed by purely non-violent means. Gandhi says, I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view... I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view but will straight away make a beginning with myself... For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. Economic Swaraj of Gandhi’s vision would be brought about by his ethical-economic strategy of adherence to bread labour, voluntary restriction of wants, swadeshi, simple technology and trusteeship.

Gandhi was of the opinion that the government of India after independence should be organized as a democracy and should be based upon institutions familiar to the people. According to him, India through ages have lived and even now lives in the villages. The country’s prosperity and progress depends upon the villages. “Since earliest times, the village has been the pivot of administration in
India... There is no doubt that villages were the real centres of social life and important units in the country's economy. They sustained the edifice of national culture, prosperity and administration. Each village community in the past was organised as a semi-independent republic, governed by its panchayats, consisting of the heads of the families. These village communities were economically self-sufficient, producing their daily necessities. Their surplus products went to the cities and to foreign markets. He believed that if the village perishes, India will perish too. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost. Gandhi said, "we have to make a choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as herself and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination."

Gandhi advocated the idea of decentralization of economic activity at the village level with a view to achieving the welfare of especially those who live there. Decentralization, in the view of Gandhi, does not mean division of economic activities including industries. The basic ingredients of economic decentralization are:

(a) Village as the most desirable unit of planning.

(b) Self-reliance of the villages for their basic necessaries like food, shelter, clothing, education and also justice in case of local disputes, law and order within the village.

(c) Village and cottage industries including small-scale industries to provide employment for those who do not get absorbed in agricultural activity.

(d) Cooperation among the villages in all matters relating to their everyday social, economic and political life.

Gandhian economics, as pointed out by Vasant Sathe, tries to seek a synthesis in the modes of economic production and distributive activity. If considered in the correct context and perspective, the Gandhian method of decentralized means of production as well as distribution would automatically prevent the growth of
a centralized mode of ownership, control of the means of production as well as the resulting capital formation.67

Swadeshi stands for self-sufficiency and the fulfilment of basic necessities. Gandhi regards self-sufficiency as “a kind of service”68 Swadeshi meant self-reliance or economic independence. Swadeshi is a spirit of restricting the use and service of surroundings at the exclusion of the remote. Swadeshi is ‘self-reliance’ or economic independence. ‘It does not mean merely the use of what is produced in one’s own country... But there is another meaning implied in it which is far greater and much more important. Swadeshi means reliance on our own strength... ‘Our strength’ means the strength of our body, our mind and our soul. The soul is supreme, and therefore soul-force is the foundation on which man must build...’69 Swadeshi meant the self-reliance of the basic units of society, the village or other communities where production is for use, not for exchange. This aspect of the swadeshi protects the villages against the domination by the cities. Swadeshi should not be confused with the narrow sense of protecting small-scale indigenous industries. It should be used in a much broader sense. Pure swadeshi is not opposed to machinery. Swadeshi movement was directed against the use of foreign cloth but it was not opposed to weaving mill-made cloth. Gandhi suggested that it should be the ideal of every Indian to wear hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. ‘...It is the greatest delusion to suppose that the duty of swadeshi begins and ends with merely spinning so much yarn anyhow and wearing khadi made from it.’70

Gandhi felt that the country is fully in need of the hand-spinning and hand-weaving industry. He wanted to make the people self-sufficient through hand-spinning. Revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving would result in the economic, cultural and the moral regeneration of the country. It was for this reason that Gandhi gave utmost importance to the economic regeneration of the poverty-ridden village India through khadi. Spinning was a cottage industry in the past. Gandhi believed that if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be able to reintroduce spinning in their homes and every village must...
repossess its own weavers. He pointed out that the Charkha supplemented the agriculture of the villages and gave it dignity. Gandhi said that "The socialism that India can assimilate is the socialism of the spinning-wheel." Khadi mentality means decentralization of the production and distribution of the necessaries of life. Therefore, the formula so far evolved is, every village to produce all its necessaries and a certain percentage in addition for the requirements of the cities.

Khadi was the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality to Gandhi. Khadi and the village industries are the true national industries of India. Only by reviving and promoting these industries shall we be able to bring true economic independence to the millions of our countrymen and build a joint national family based on peace, harmony and love. He wanted the villages to be free from the influence of industrialization as industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to the passive or active exploitation of the villages as the problem of competition and marketing comes in. The villages should be self-contained. To be compatible with the decentralized, village-based economy, industry has to be small-scale and traditional based on a non-violent technology.

Charkha, according to Gandhi, symbolizes a non-violent way of life. "The science of Khadi requires decentralization of production and consumption." Gandhi's emphasis on decentralized economy was the expression of his non-violent way of life and consistent with his general non-violent outlook. "Of all the non-violent weapons forged by Gandhi, Khadi was the nearest moral equivalent of the infantryman's rifle. It was conducive to national solidarity. It provided the lowliest with a weapon of defence, which on a mass scale was formidable. Also like the infantryman's rifle it was a powerful and meaningful symbol."

In the participative decentralized democratic structure, the rulers should work as the 'trustees' of the people. Gandhi pleaded for the adoption of trusteeship which occupies an important place in Gandhian thought. Gandhi said, "My theory of trusteeship is no makeshift, certainly no camouflage... It has the sanction of
philosophy and religion behind it." Trusteeship, according to him, was a measure sanctioned by Indian tradition. In order to understand the concept of trusteeship properly it should be viewed in the context of age-old Indian traditions and values. It is influenced by the ideal of the Isopaniṣad that things of this world should be enjoyed by renunciation. The verse of the Isopaniṣad on which Gandhi’s doctrine of trusteeship is based, says: ‘All that is in the universe is pervaded by God. Renounce first, therefore, in order to enjoy. Covet not anybody’s riches.’ Gandhi’s trusteeship is based on the mantram: tena tyaktena bhūnjīthāḥ (Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it). Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.

According to the theory of trusteeship, those who own money are asked to behave like trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. They must know that all the wealth do not belong to them, what belong to them is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of their wealth belong to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. Gandhi believed that a trustee has no heir but the public.

Gandhi, at the same time, believed that 'Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid’s definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method...' 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 to practise.'

The political agenda in Gandhian Swarāj is the resurrection of the demos through participative democratic structures. Like the economic structure, the political organisation of India should rest on the devolution of power. Gandhi wanted the government of free India to rest on the foundation of the revitalized
village Panchayats. The panchayat will have autonomy as far as the internal village administration is concerned. He held that democracy could be most effective in small units where people could confront one another. The panchayat system as viewed by Gandhi represents a village community which is self-sufficient, especially in the matter of the basic necessities of life. He argued strongly in favour of decentralized economic and political power through the organisation of village panchayats. The economic structure of India should be based upon decentralized industry. Power should be diffused through many centres. The State and the Central governments were to be based on the village units.

Gandhi wanted to build up a 'Loksamaj'. This society or 'Loksamaj' would be established through 'Lokniti', not through 'power'. Gandhi's disenchantment with the party system kept on urging him to seek a better substitute for parliamentary democracy. He felt that democracy in India needs to be society-based for it helps in the full-fledged development of the personality of an individual. Democracy is concerned with people and unless there is full-fledged development of the people the society based on it cannot be a healthy one. Freedom and equality are the necessary conditions of the development of an individual. Constructive approach towards people's self-rule seemed to provide him an alternative to parliamentary democracy. So he spoke of Panchayati Raj. But he did not dream about a Panchayat system controlled by political parties. Gandhi believed that "When Panchayat Raj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the zamindars, the capitalists and the Rajas can hold way only so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate with the evil of zamindari or capitalism, it must die of inaction. In Panchayat Raj only the Panchayat will be obeyed and the Panchayat can only work through the laws of their making."\(^{83}\) Gandhi believed that when the dream of Panchayat Raj comes true, i.e., when true democracy is realized, the humblest and lowest Indian could be equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the country.\(^{84}\)
Gandhi, at the same time, realized that nobody can practice perfect non-violence. "We may not be perfect in our use of it, but we definitely discard the use of violence, and grow from failure to success." Non-violence is only a theory like Euclid's point or straight line. But he regarded the notions of a non-violent State, a non-violent society and a non-violent democracy as a theory to provide standards of assessment like the Euclidean models. "A government cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-violent, because it represents all the people. I do not today conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a predominantly non-violent society. And I am working for it." 

"He believed that if we continue to work for such a society, it will slowly come into being to an extent, such that the people can benefit by it. He thought it practicable to work for the realization of a 'predominantly non-violent society'. Gandhi believed not in the perfection of human nature but in the perfectibility of man. "Let us be sure of our ideal. We shall ever fail to realize it, but shall never cease to strive for it." 

The ultimate ideal is 'purest anarchy' or stateless society. This ideal being unrealizable Gandhi concentrated on the evolution of a predominantly non-violent state. A society organized and run on the basis of complete non-violence would be purest anarchy. "The ideal non-violent state will be an ordered anarchy." Gandhi described himself as an anarchist not in the sense of unruliness (which is a negative condition) but in the positive sense of being unruled because rule is unnecessary for the preservation of order. In 1931, Gandhi wrote, "If national life become so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of enlightened anarchy. In such a state every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that Government is best which governs the least." 

"By a non-violent state we mean the state that is predominantly non-violent. A state depending as it does more or less on coercion is the negation of non-violence.
The completely non-violent state would no longer be a state. It would then be the stateless society and society can be stateless when it is completely or almost completely non-violent. This is an ideal that may not be fully realized. What we may get in actual practice may be a predominantly non-violent state advancing towards, though perhaps never reaching, the stateless stage.\footnote{90}

Notes and References

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9. Young India, December 1, 1927 and October 15, 1931.
13. Young India, March 26, 1931.
16. Young India, 12.6.24.
17. Young India, 29.1.25.
18. Young India, 26.3.31.
19. Young India, 16.4.31.
21. Young India, 1.12.27.
22. Note 7, p. 70, Quoted in Asha Kaushik, op.cit, p. 67.
23. Harijan, 28.7.46.
24. Harijan, 30.3.40.
28. Young India, 2.7.1931.
31. Young India, June 1921.
35. Harijan, 11.2.39.
38. Harijan, 2.3.1947.
42. Harijan, 27.5.1939.
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44. Harijan, May 1946.
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52. Harijan, 30.12.1939.
54. Ibid.
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56. Harijan, 28.7.1946.
58. Young India, December 1, 1927.
59. Fragment of letter to Abdul Ghaffer Khan, Harijan 18 January, 1942.
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82. Harijan, 3.6.1939.
84. Harijan, 18.1.1948.
85. Harijan, 21.7.1940.
86. Harijan, 9.3.1940.
88. Harijan, 25.8.1940.
89. Young India, 2.7.1931.