CHAPTER - I

SWARAJ AND SWADESH

In ancient Indian political thought the notion of self-government as to the collectivity of members of a polity in ancient Indian political thought was closely related to the conception of self-rule as applied to the moral growth of every human being. The maturity and development of policy were regarded as a reflection as well as index of the degree of moral maturity and self-cultivation of an elite or a generality of individuals. At the centre of ancient Indian political thought lay the concept of Swaraj or self-rule connected with the notion of Swarajya which referred to a particular mode of securing self-determination in a polity comprise of several distinct sectors. In modern India the term Swaraj was exclusively identified by Dadabhai Naoroji, B. G. Tilak and Sri Aurobindo with the goal of national independence. The emphasis was wholly shifted from the positive to the negative connotation of the term and its application entirely transformed from its individual to collective scope. Towards the end of the nineteenth century even before the term Swaraj, in its new sense, acquired common currency in the nationalist movement the Bengali militants sought to justify their doctrine of boycott of British goods in the name of Swadeshi or patriotism.

Gandhi when entered the Indian scene, was able to restore to the term ‘Swaraj’ as its older meaning while retaining its newer sense to interpret the term Swadeshi and considerably extended its application. He restored the close connection between Swaraj and Swadeshi, between self-government and national self-dependence. Instead of assimilating the concept of freedom to that of community by merging the individual into an organic conception of society, he derived the very notion of communal
self-reliance from his doctrine of individual self-rule, and showed how the pursuit of swaraj must necessarily involve the acceptance of Swadeshi.³

The appalling poverty of India and the rapidity with which it has increased during the period of British rule on account of the deliberate destruction of our handicrafts created a deep impression on Gandhi’s mind even in his early days. He has been on the look out for the ways and means of relieving it. As early as in 1908, he spoke of ‘the ancient and scared handlooms’ in his ‘Hind Swaraj’ and advised lawyers and doctors to take up the wheel and wealthy men to devote their money to its encouragement.⁴ He was of the view that it is necessary to attend to the primary needs of human being and satisfy them by the use only of things that are predicted by himself or his immediate neighborhood. The primary needs are food, shelter and clothing. Gandhi realized that the country has not altogether lost the art of providing and producing the food for its needs. In matter of clothing we were not only self-sufficient but used to produce a large quantity for sale and export to other countries.

True Swadeshi according to Gandhi is the revival and presentation of village industries which is the life line of rural economy which in turn is the heart of a national economy. It could be understood from his own words, “what is needed is protection of the village crafts and the workers behind them from the crushing competition of the power-driven machinery whether it is worked in India or in foreign lands claim that this is true, fruitful and cent per cent Swadeshi”.⁵

Gandhi was more practical. He saw that the Swadeshi and the boycott movement could not prosper without an increase in indigenous production which would be independent of the mills. He also realized that
in olden days the agriculture masses in India had always some subsidiary industries to add to their meager income. Gandhi thought to add to their meager income. Gandhi thought that the only industry which could be universal was the textile industry. This was also the biggest item of import from England. It had made for prosperity not only of Manchester but also of Great Britain. For centuries there had been a tradition in India of hand spinning and hand weaving. The former had been given up in many parts of the country owing to the import of mill yarn from England for manufacture in Indian mills. But weaving was yet common in all parts of India; though the handloom industry was being progressively wiped out in competition with indigenous and foreign mill cloth. Gandhi considered spinning and weaving to be the industries which could best provide subsidiary work to the agricultural masses of India. Therefore, he worked for the revival of this industry. Gandhi also believed that if import of cloth from abroad superfluous, it would greatly add not only to its economic but also its social and political strength.

In a speech delivered before the Missionary Conference, Madras, on 14 February 1916, he defined Swadeshi in the following terms: “After much thinking I have arrived at a definition of Swadeshi that, perhaps, best illustrate my meaning. Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restrict us to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of definition, I must restrict myself to ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate surroundings. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve
those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting”.

Khadi was not confined to the hand spun and hand woven cotton cloth. Silk and woolen cloth was also included, and in fact coarser fibers like just from which carpets and the like were produced were also exhibited and their processes demonstrated but the experts brought from various parts of the country. Later on small scale and cottage industries were also included in this programme. All this gave a fillip to the khadi movement with immense political potentialities. Thus it was made the most effective way of mass mobilization and political consciousness. Every spinner, weaver, printer, dyer, artisan etc. and the family members, become conscious of the fact that they are a part of a great national organization and though they work for their wages, their work is patriotic and helps the nation. The Hindu, the Muslim, the Harijan, the Casteman and the Casteless all worked together within the organization. Working together they tend to forget their differences. This happened in a mill too, but in organized cottage industry the extent and degree of this unity achieved was greater supported as it was by the consciousness of unity of national purpose. The organizer of village and cottage industry were a body of disciplined volunteers from whose ranks, satyagrahis were recruited. As a matter of fact constructive workers constituted a standing army of Satyagrahis.

“One can imagine nothing from western standpoint, more fantastic. To spin had become for Gandhi’s devout followers a species of rituals. One came down to breakfast to discover one’s host, a doctor with a Scottish training, squatting at his antiquated hand spindle, bent on completing his obligatory hour’s work. In the train a lady will take a
folding spindle from a case, assemble it, and calmly set to work. These were the edited of a most original movement”.  

In 1929 regarding Dandi March, Brailsford wrote, “One enters the zone of sedition with the next method, the attempt to smash the Government’s salt monopoly. It is the kindergarten stage of revolution. One smiles at the notion that the king emperor can be unseated by boiling sea water in a kettle. He himself admitted the impact of these activities. Even these mild activities are however an attack on the revenue, and landed thousands of Indians in imprison, including Gandhi himself. He knew his public. He staged his salt making as a quasi-religious pilgrimage. Its pathetic innocence helped this law abiding people to take the first plunge into disobedience.

In the opinion of Alvin Toffler who is the author of “Future Shock” and the “Third Wave”. Gandhian model is the best and next best alternate to the whole of the world. He mentions three waves one is the wave of capitalist another is the Marxian wave and third is the Gandhian wave. Gandhian wave

Builds a desirable ideal society, in which social change is possible through non-violence accomplishment.

An important consequence of the idea that our freedom or self-rule depends entirely upon our self-awareness, self-respect and self-discipline is the notion that when the masses of a nation are awakened to a sense of their collective and undivided claims to freedom, they have already attained to swaraj, in a sense. Swaraj can not be attained by a nation even in the formal sense unless it is gained as the result of a mass movement involving the willing and conscious participation by most of the
individuals who make up a nation, “Purna Swaraj denotes a condition of things when the dumb and the lame millions will speak and walk. That Swaraj can not be achieved by force but by organizations and unity.” In 1931, he was asked to explain the significance of the phrase ‘Purna Swaraj’ or ‘complete independence’, which had become the declared goal of the Congress. He replied. I do not know any word or phrase to answer it is English language. I can, therefore, only give an explanation. The root meaning of Swaraj is self-rule. Swaraj may, therefore, be rendered as disciplined rule from within and purna means “complete”. Independence has no such limitation. Independence is negative. Purna Swaraj does not exclude association with any nation much less and with England. But it can only mean association for mutual benefit and it will. Thus there are countries which are said to be independent but which have no Purna Swaraj e.g. Nepal. The word Swaraj is scared word a Vedic word meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which independence often means.

Gandhi’s Swadeshi spirit lays emphasis on the production and consumption of unutilized and under utilized resources available in the country. He did not want that a nation should be dependent on foreign countries for her basic needs. But at the same time, he did not discard every thing, foreign. In 1926, he wrote, “I have never considered the exclusion of everything foreign under every conceivable circumstance a part of swadeshi. The board definition of swadeshi is the use of all home made goods things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such use is necessary for the protection of home industry, more specially those industries without which India will become pareperized. In my opinion, therefore, swadeshi which excludes the use of everything foreign, no matter how beneficent it may be, and irrespective of the fact that it
impoverishes nobody, is a narrow interpretation of Swadeshi.”

Thus, he was willing to allow international trade and exchange of commodities if this meant an exchange of equal advantages and did not involve injustice. However, if it was to be question of choice, he would have preferred self-sufficiency. He defined a Swadeshi article which sub-serves the interest of the millions even though the capital and talent are foreign but under effective Indian control. To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign, and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one’s country manufactures for which it is not suited would be criminal folly and negation of the Swadeshi Spirit.

Gandhi was not completely against the use of foreign capital and technology for development. All he wanted was moderation technology for development. All he wanted was moderation in imports suitability, appropriateness, decision making power and management in the Indian hands. In other words, he wanted technology transfer but not foreign management and control.

An industry to be Indian must be demonstrably in the interest of masses. It must be manned by Indians both skilled and unskilled. Its capital and machinery should be Indian and the labour employed should have a living wage and be comfortably housed, while the welfare of the children of the laborers should be guaranteed by the employers. This is an ideal definition of effective Indian control or what industry could satisfy Gandhi as being Indian.

Thus, when Gandhi allowed foreign trade, investment and technology, he attached these conditions with it, injustice. But these conditions are missing in the present context. With the opening of the economy, a large number of foreign companies are being lured to invest
in various sectors in the country and the disastrous effects of this have started showing their ugly face. These concerns with the advanced foreign technology are better with lesser cost. They are using the labour saving techniques because most of the production is done by the highly sophisticated automatic machines. The quality of goods produced by them too is of course better than the quality of goods produced by the Indians with the indigenous technology and raw-material. The result of this is that there are no buyers of the Indian goods in the country itself. The whole of the market has been snatched by these multinationals and other concerns based upon the foreign technology. A large number of Indian companies are at the brink of closure while the multinationals are flourishing at their cost. The perfect competition or the survival of the fittest is the main essence of the market economy but should not forget one basic element that there can be no competition among unequal. The Swadeshi concerns in general and small scale and cottage industries with the multinationals. The latter have huge financial resources at their disposal. Their products are better in quality and spend a very large amount on selling their products in the form of advertisements on a Television, Radio, Newspapers, Magazines, etc. they can throw any small producer out of the market within no time and precisely this is the fate of the Indian producers.

When a low cost better product replaces the high cost product, this is no doubt the progress. The cost which matters the most is the ‘opportunity cost’. If the high cost producer has no opportunity of engaging in alternative production, the opportunity cost of the labour is nil. This means that there is a small gain only if the non-labour costs of the low cost products are lower than the non-labour costs of high cost producers who are being displaced. Labour costs, in this context are not
confined to the labour actually employed in any particular establishment, but extend also to the native labour content of materials used in the manufacturing process, unless such materials themselves have a scarcity value due to natural causes. In a country like ours, in which the opportunity cost of labour is nil, high cost products produced by indigenous labour from indigenous materials are normally very much more advantageous than low cost products produced with the help of highly efficient machinery from special materials which may themselves have been imported or else prepared by a further set of special machinery.\textsuperscript{15} It is of course unfortunate that prices actually charged, do not reflect the basic fact that the opportunity cost of labour may be nil. Many of the paradoxes of economics result from precisely this divergence between private cost accounting and true social cost. That is why Khadi is produced by labour which would otherwise do nothing at all, it is for the economy as a whole, the cheapest cloth of all, a fact very clearly appreciated by Mahatma Gandhi.\textsuperscript{16}

Thus the recent trend in our economy is complete deviation from the path shown by the father of the nation. We are becoming more and more dependent on other completely ignoring the swadeshi spirit of self-reliance. It is an old saying that financial dependent man or a nation can not remain independent for a larger period. J.D. Sethi in his publication ‘International Economic Disorder’\textsuperscript{17} gave a timely stern warning to the poor nations and their people against their becoming willing victims of the allurement and blackmail by the rich countries.\textsuperscript{18} In his own words, “If the present trends is projected trends is projected to the future, there is no scope for economic survival and political stability of the majority of the less developed countries. It is ironic that ruling elite of these countries get enormous benefit from the present order.\textsuperscript{19} Indeed they have become
its salesman and partners of their exploiters. It is even more ironic that medical interpretations or theories of iniquitous order, such as imperialism and dependency, fit very well in its game. Without getting detached from the global order till such time that the less developed countries become self-reliant and build a system of mutual cooperation as well as follow the principles of moral and political economy as suggested by Mahatma Gandhi, the less developed countries are threatened to become international ghettos of the global order.”

Thus it is the high time for the countrymen in general and the ruling elite in particular to do some heart searching. They (the foreign concerns) are not coming here to bale us out from the present economic crisis but to make a fast buck. The sooner we realize this, the latter it will be otherwise we are in the process of mortgaging our swaraj by neglecting swadeshi.
References:


10. Ibid.

11. Ibid
12. Young India, April 2, 1931, p.55.
CHAPTER - II

GANDHIAN STRATEGY : THE EXCLUSIVE MANTRA FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS, IN MODERN CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Gandhian Strategy

2.2.1 Satyagraha

2.2.2 Truth

2.2.3 Non-violence

2.3 Relevance of Gandhian Strategy in Modern Context

2.4 Conclusion