



GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY: A RELEVANCE OF SWADESHI

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Abstract:-

Gadhian philosophy of life was as holistic one. He looked upon life as a supreme value and an indivisible whole. Gandhi integrated the different fact of life and believed in the inner unity of life and oneness of all creations. It was his firm conviction that law governing the conduct and life of human species and of the universe is the law of truth and the path leading to it is the principle of non-violence or love. The only way to realize the grand and noble aim of life is to organize all activities of life on the basis of twin principle s of truth and non-violence. It will be difficult to take all aspects of life in one go for a systematic analysis. But it is always, necessary to be aware that we are concentrating on a piece of the whole, one at a time, and it is the whole we are aiming at. At present we are contemplating on one aspect of Gandhian Philosophy, that is Swadeshi. Swadeshi is an integral part of Gandhian economies. Gandhian economics is nothing but an economics of love or non-violence. Our main concern should be how to organize our lives according to the law of human species. Swadeshi, trusteeship, decentralized mode of production etc. are parts of the magnificent and grand life which Gandhi wanted to achieve for all members of the society including the downtrodden.

Key words – Nonviolence, Truth, Swadeshi, Hinduism, Politics, Village, Production, Economy, Sarvodaya, Swaraj, Nation, Sovereignty, education.

Introduction :-

Mahatma Gandhi was a champion of 'Swadeshi', or home economy. People outside India know of Gnadhi's campaigns to end British colonialism, but this was only a small part of his struggle. The greater part of Gandhi's work was to renew India's vitality and regenerate its culture. Gnadhi was not interested simply in exchanging rule by white Sahibs for rule by brown Sahibs; he wanted the government to surrender much of its power to local villages.



For Gandhi the spirit and the soul of India rested in the village communities. He said, "The true India is to be found not in its few cities, but in its seven hundred thousand villages. If the villages Perish, India will Perish too". Swadeshi is a program for long term survival.

Principal of Swadeshi :-

Gandhi's vision of a free India was not a national state but a confederation of self governing, self reliant, self employed a people living in a village communities, deriving their right livelihood from the products of their home heads. According to the principle of swadeshi, whatever is made or produced in the village must be used first and foremost by the members of the village. Swadeshi avoids economic dependence on external market forces that could make the village community vulnerable. The spirit of the home an extension of the family rather than a collection of competing individuals. Gandhi's dream was not of personal self-sufficiency, not even family self-sufficiency, but the self-sufficiency of the village community.

Gandhi described swadeshi as "Law of Laws" ingrained in the basic nature of human being. The necessity for the inclusion of swadeshi as a row is due to the fact that the people have forgotten this law, to use Gandhi's own words; the law is Sunk into oblivion. According to Gandhi Swadharma in Gita interpreted in terms of one's physical environment gives us the law of Swadeshi. Gandhi defined Swadeshi as the "Spirit in us which restricts us to the use and devices of our immediate, to the exclusion of the more remote."

Gandhi proposed the organization of society into self-efficient, self governing village communities, each empowered to take all the decision that affect the community. The inhabitants would be self- employed and would produce, with the fruit of their labour, the goods and services consumed by the community. In an economy based on the principles of swadeshi, everything produced by the community is destined for local consumption. The means that production does not depend on market forces, only local demand, therefore pressure on the environment is minimal. External trade only occurs for those goods and services that the community is unable to produce. On the contrary, the nation states of our global economy attempt to maintain a favourable balance of payments by increasing the volume of exports, which necessarily leads to increasing production and therefore, the exploitation of natural resources. Gandhi especially emphasized the autonomous



character of the inhabitants of these communities. In an economy of swadeshi, each individual is capable of generating his own work, is capable of using his own skills to produce something that will be consumed in the community. Self-sufficiency is therefore achieved at community; and not at an individual level.

Social Extension of Swadeshi :-

Applying the spirit of swadeshi in the context of Indian social structure, Gandhi initially accepted the institution of Varna associated with it. Gandhi considered all professions as equally important. He made an earnest attempt to overcome the defects of the caste system by discarding certain obnoxious practices which he considered as historical accretion, which was not the integral part of original system. Gandhi looked at the scourge of untouchability as a blot on Hinduism. Gandhian Social ideology has been rightly called Sarvodaya. Thus it was different from socialism and communism. He has explained his own ideology and other popular ideologists. He was well converse with socialist and communist literature. He had occasion to see how they worked and yet in the tradition of Indian thought and culture he developed an ideology which was entirely indigenous. Gandhi believed that true Swaraj can be attained by uplifting these deprived sections of the society. Gandhi's constructive programme aimed at reconstruction of society through voluntary and participatory social action. In a sense the constructive work plays the role of civil society/ NGOs. Gandhi looked upon constructive programme as a 'truthful and nonviolent way of winning Poorna Swaraj.

Political Extention of Swadeshi :-

The application of Swadeshi in Politics call for the revival of the indigenous institutions and strengthening them to overcome some of its defects. Gandhi pleaded the need for internal governance (swaraj) as early as 1909 in his noted booklet Hind Swaraj or Indian. Home rule. According to Gandhi the state with continue to exist for there will be some individuals or groups with anti social tendencies and the essence of external restraint will lead to anarchy. But to Gandhi the state is not an end in itself but "One of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life". Gandhi further outlined his vision of village Swaraj by introducing the concept of oceanic circle in opposition to paramedical structure of society, placing individual at the centre of the society.



Gandhi, was against the theory of sovereignty of the state. He conceded "I admit that there are certain things which cannot be done without political power, but there are numerous other things which do not at all depend upon political power when people come into the political power the interference with the freedom of the other words, a nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much interference is truly democratic. Which such condition is absent the form of Government is democratic is name".

Economic Extension of Swadeshi :-

The implications of Swadeshi in the field of economic Gandhi, was convinced that the deep poverty prevailing among masses was mainly due to the ruinous departure from the path of Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life. During the time of India's struggle for Independence Gandhi realized that the economic salvation of Indian consists in encouraging and reviving indigenous industries. Gandhi found Khadi as the most important corollary of the principal of Swadeshi in its practical application to society. Universalising Khadi or spinning wheel means decentralization of production and distribution of the necessities of life. In such an economic system there will be an organic relationship between production, distribution and consumption.

Gandhi was not an economist in the academy sense of the term. He was however very much conversant with the economic problems of the country and he thought over them with his characteristic basic approach. He himself said in an address delivered before the missionary conference "I am not economist but India become a self sustained country, growing all the produce she needs. This may be an Utterly ridiculous proposition and perhaps the best proof that it cannot be true that England is one of the largest importers in the world." Gandhi however did not sharply distinguish between than the distinction between religion and politics.

Cultural dimension of swadeshi

The concept of Swadeshi is a part of Gandhi's prescription or his prolegomena of a cultural revolution. Gandhian constructive programme follows that a purely economic interpretation of the concept is not only incorrect and illegitimate but also leads to grave distortion of the meaning of the



‘spirit of Swadeshi’ which Gandhi untiringly invokes in contexts other than the economic. Gandhi envisaged, in respect of Swadeshi, a multi dimensional applicability that left no aspect of human life, personal, social or psychological untouched and uncovered. As one seeks an adequate framework to conceptualize the ‘spirit’ of Swadeshi, one realizes its close kinship with the concept of ‘Swaraj’ which again was invested by Gandhi with a unique and distinctive connotation and content all his own. Indeed, like Satya (Truth) and Ahimsa (non-violence), Swaraj (self rule) and Swadeshi too are like two sides of the same coin. For the concept of Swadeshi to take a concrete form, it obviously requires a political economy that would be radically different, both in structure and content. The heart of Swadeshi was neighbourliness with human beings and also animals and various objects in nature such as trees, meadows, lakes and the rivers. Thus neighbourliness is a profound ecological awareness that seeks togetherness, harmony and non dualistic relationship. The social, political and economic structure expressing these values in the quotidian aspects of life must be radically at variance with the one usually come across all over the world.

Swadeshi through Religion :-

To follow the spirit of Gandhi’s Swadeshi in the field of religion one has to restrict to the ancestral religion. He believed in the fundamental equality of all religions, what he called Sarvadharm Samabhava. In the tradition of ancient Indian thinkers Gandhi defined man as a spark of the Divine. The Vedas, Upanishads, Gita and puranas were acceptable to him provided they had appealed to his reasons. Also Gandhi himself said “ I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of Vedas. I believe the Bible the Kuran and the Zend-A-Vesta to be as divinely inspired as Vedas.” He also said “All religion is founded on the same moral laws. Man’s ideal is to achieve God through truth and non-violence.”

Gandhi identified God with truth and law and therefore synthesized religion and morality, religion and politics and ethics. Gandhi called his God by the name of Ram because this word has a wide phase among Indian masses. He called his ideal society ‘Ram Rajya’. The word ‘Ram’ Undoubtedly has been borrowed from the Ram Charit Manas which, along with Bhagbad Gita, Gandhi considered the best works that India has produced. Gandhi’s Swadeshi approach to religion has great significance in the context of growing communal divide and religious fundamentalism in



India and other parts of the globe. This approach is essential to promote harmony among the followers of various faiths and preserving the composite culture of a country like India.

Swadeshi in Education :-

One of the major areas in which Gandhi applied his Swadeshi ideal was the field of Education. In Hind Swaraj he rejected the British educational system prevailing in India. He believed that education has to be rooted in the culture and tradition of the country. He placed an alternative system of education called 'Nai Talim' or Basic education. In his scheme the craft was the pivot and center of all educational subjects to the central craft. He placed alternative institution like Gujarat vidyapith, Kashi vidyapith and others during the time of Indian struggle for independence. Gandhi wanted handicraft to be “the pivot and center of education” But it includes literary education also “In my scheme of things” he writes, “the hand will handle tools before it draws or traces the writing. The eyes will read the picture of letters and words as they will know either thing in life, the ear will catch the names and the meaning of things and sentences. The whole training will be natural responsive, and therefore, the cheapest in the land. The children of my school will, therefore, read much more quickly than they will write”. Thus the central feature of the new scheme is education of the child through a useful productive craft without neglecting literary training. Gandhi holds that “the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education”.

Conclusion:-

It is obvious from the above analysis that Swadeshi is key for basic understanding of Gandhi's philosophy of life. He was against all external control of the individuals whether it is by the collectivity or by the state. In his spiritual world view the individual is absolutely free, man's is to grow and to grow freely. Though the impact of Gandhi's ideas was not so much clear for some years after his death. His influence in world politics is only too clear today. Though not directly his ideal of non-violence has been accepted today by the most powerful nations of the world and gradually the world is going towards more and more control over science and technology and upon educational, moral and spiritual progress. Gandhi successfully demonstrated that the Swadeshi spirit could be integrated in every walk of our national life. He did not stop only at conceptual level of Swadeshi. He



suggested concrete institutional set up in most of the areas of his concern. Now it is more than clear that sooner or later, India, even the world, would have to take to Gandhian path to meet the challenges effectively.

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