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Baratiya Model of Gram Swaraj

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Abstract: Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Swaraj, orself-rule, goes beyond the simple demand for independence from colonial rule. It is a comprehensive philosophy that encompasses the moral, political, economic, and social regeneration of individuals and communities. Gandhi envisioned Swaraj not just as freedom from foreign domination but as a state where individuals are self-reliant, morally upright, and actively engaged in the governance of their communities. This idea of selfrule was rooted in nonviolence (Ahimsa), truth (Satya), and a profound respect for individual conscience. His belief was that true democracy arises from the bottom up, through empowered and ethical citizens who govern themselves and their communities without undue reliance on centralized power structures.
Keywords - Decentralized, Economic independence, Manifesto.

Introduction - The word 'Swaraj' combines 'swa' (self) and 'raj' (rule), indicating not just political autonomy but mastery over oneself. Gandhi's Swaraj was spiritual in essence, rooted in the ethical and religious traditions of Hinduism, Jainism, and Christianity. It meant self-governance in the truest sense—freedom from desires, moral weakness, and dependence on others. Gandhi believed that only when individuals achieve spiritual self-mastery can they construct a just and free society.

Swaraj Gandhi Swaraj had developed out of the combination of his Indian roots, his reading and his early Experiences in London promoted him to pen down his vision of Swaraj for India.

During the period when Gandhi's freedom Movement obtained its mass base, he again and again described and explained the concept of Swaraj as the goal of freedom struggle, in terms of political, economic, social, and moral right of the downtrodden and exploited Indian masses. By Swaraj, he meant freedom and self-rule which should be practiced at three levels,

1. In case of individual Swaraj, it is self-control or Swaraj, it is self-control or Swaraj of the self.
2. In case of the country, it is the freedom of India from the British clutch.
3. In case of community level, it is Gram Swaraj or freedom of village.

Gandhi viewed Swaraj or self-rule necessarily, as a mode of conduct which points out their duty the path of control over aspiration and the path of "Mastery over (their) minds and passions". It meant the knowledge of left and living within bounds.

Political liberty was a required precondition of the Swaraj. It is the first step to realise the goal of Swaraj for political self government of the people Gandhi had valuable contributions and for that he worked with and through the India National Congress. Of course, there were critical Philosophical and ideological differences between Gandhi and other prominent leaders of the congress, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi Visualized a model of Swaraj and that model was Developed and enunciated in his Hind Swaraj (1909). It was his Manifesto but his strategy of Swaraj was unacceptable to Nehru another Congress leaders.

Gandhi believed that social Swaraj comes prior to political Swaraj. It is to be given to our enslaved brother and sisters. If we do not give importance to the Swaraj of others, we lose our moral claim of freedom from the Britishers. He wrote in this connection, Swaraj for me mean freedom for the meanest of our Countrymen. If the lot of the Panchama (untouchable). Is not improve when we are all suffering, it is not likely to be better under inebriation of Swaraj. If it is necessary for us to buy peace with the Musalmans as condition of Swaraj, it is equally necessary for us to give peace to the Panchama before we can with any show of justice or self-respect talk of Swaraj. I am not interested in freeing India from the English yoke, I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke, I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke what so ever".

Gandhi believed in the real freedom which is not only in the removal of Untouchability but also in the promotion of heart unity between all the sections of society and removal of all other social evils. He said "Swaraj cannot be had so long as the walls of Prejudice, passion and superstition continue to stible the growth of that stately oak.

Swaraj means Sarvodya in economic terms or the welfare of all and it is possible through economic equality and nonviolent, independence and political freedom is merely a prelude. Gandhi clarified the concept of Swaraj in a geometrical way in Harijan. He writes,

"Let there be no mistake about my concept of 'Swaraj'.

It is complete independence of alien control and complete.

Economic independence, so at one end you have political independence, at the other economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social the corresponding end is 'dharma', that religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. but is superior to them all.... Let us call this the square of Swaraj, which will be out of shape, if any of its angles in untrue".

Gandhi's conception of Swaraj provides a complete meaning covering all essential aspects of freedom, that internal freedom as moral Swaraj and external Swaraj as social, economic and political freedom. Without moral and spiritual Swaraj all other aspects of Swaraj are Meaningless. He conceptualized a classless and casteless Society. In summary, the entire focus of Swaraj was on self-reliance of the individual, village, taluka, district, province and nation in that order. Its soul was disintegration of power and economy leading to a gradual reduction of the role of the state in society and an enlarged role of the individual and of the local community in their praxis.

Relevance of Swaraj in Contemporary Times : Participatory Democracy in a Globalized World - In the age of globalization and centralization, Gandhi's vision of grassroots democracy offers an alternative model. Decentralized governance ensures that decisions are context-specific, inclusive, and responsive to local needs. It promotes a sense of ownership and accountability among citizens.

Reclaiming Ethics in Governance: The moral crisis in contemporary politics underscores the need for ethical governance. Corruption, authoritarianism, and apathy are rampant. Gandhi's emphasis on truth, transparency, and service provides a much-needed ethical compass for modern leadership.

Sustainability and Economic Localism: Gandhi's focus on local economies and sustainable living prefigures today's environmental concerns. His advocacy for small-scale, ecologically friendly production aligns with movements for climate justice, de-growth, and ecological democracy.

Social Harmony and Communal Tolerance : In an era of growing religious intolerance and social fragmentation, Gandhi's commitment to nonviolence and pluralism offers valuable lessons. He saw all religions as paths to the divine and promoted peaceful coexistence through mutual respect.

Conclusion: Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Swaraj is a transformative philosophy that intertwines moral self-discipline with participatory politics. It challenges both citizens and leaders to rise above self-interest and serve the greater good. By placing ethics at the center of political life and advocating decentralized, inclusive governance, Gandhi offers a powerful framework for reimagining democracy in the 21st century. Though his ideas face criticism and practical challenges, their enduring appeal lies in their ability to humanize politics and empower individuals.

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