



**BLOCK 2**

**GANDHI'S POLITICAL CONCERNS AND  
IDEAS**

**Pignou**  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY



---

## UNIT 4 SWARAJ\*

---

### Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
  - Aims and Objectives
- 4.2 Swaraj
- 4.3 Political Swaraj
- 4.4 Economic Swaraj
  - 4.4.1 Village Decentralization (Gram Swaraj)
  - 4.4.2 Swadeshi and Khadi
  - 4.4.3 Trusteeship
  - 4.4.4 Bread and Labour
- 4.5 Social Swaraj
- 4.6 Swaraj as Self-Control
- 4.7 Summary
- 4.8 Terminal Questions
- 4.9 Suggested Readings

---

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

---

The late 19<sup>th</sup> Century witnessed a growth of a national identity and cultural nationalism in India. The Indian National Congress was established in

1885; Swami Dayananda and Swami Vivekananda awoke India's pride in its own identity. They espoused the 'Vedas' and the greatness of India's past. The educated Indian middle class still felt inferior to the 'white sahibs'. The partition of Bengal by the British shook up the Indians and writers such as Rabindranath Tagore were working to forge an Indian identity through their works such as 'Swadeshi Samaj'. Tilak's call for 'Swaraj as my birthright' consolidated the new mood of Indian nationalism particularly after the Ilbert Bill (1883).

Gandhi underlined the need to bridge the gulf between the cities and villages, educated and uneducated not under the colonial influence, but through the awakening and efforts of the Indian themselves. In 'Hind Swaraj' (1909) Gandhi propagated the spirit of 'Swaraj' using this word instead of the English word independence or freedom. According to Gandhi a collective effort was needed to build a nation with continuity of tradition, incorporating essential reforms and giving proper position to the concept of individualism. Gandhi said that Swaraj is an inclusive concept-political, economic, social and moral-emphasising on the utmost necessity of the human being to be as perfect as possible.

#### *Aims and Objectives*

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

- Gandhi's concept of Swaraj
- The meaning of Swaraj as self-rule.

- Political, Economic and Social dimensions of Swaraj
- Swaraj as self-control

---

## 4.2 SWARAJ

---

The concept of Swaraj has been given much importance in Gandhi's spiritual, political, social and economic ideas and has been frequently espoused in his writings and speeches. He re-evaluated the meaning of Swaraj according to the times he lived in, and used the word, Swaraj, to reawaken the spirit of Indian people. According to him the word Swaraj was a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint. Gandhi believed that national Swaraj could be achieved by the same means that were needed for attaining individual Swaraj. Gandhi believed that the methods of attaining individual Swaraj with national Swaraj were similar and complementary to each-other. Gandhi proclaimed that self-government depended entirely upon one's internal strength, upon one's ability to fight against all odds. He said that political self-government, that is, self-government for a large number of men and women, is no better than individual self-government, and, therefore, it is to be attained by precisely the same means that are required for individual self-government or self-rule.

---

## 4.3 POLITICAL SWARAJ

---

Gandhi believed that each nation should have its own system of government according to the conditions prevalent in which there would be the rule of the people. The essence of his concept of Swaraj was that power must be in the hands of the people. He aimed at a democratic state based on moral authority. He insisted that democracy would be an impossible thing until the power was shared by all. Gandhi was impressed by Abraham Lincoln's concept of democracy as 'a Government of the people, by the people for the people'<sup>24</sup>. Gandhi opined that under democracy individual liberty of opinion and action should be fiercely protected. He emphasised that a democrat must be totally selfless and must not think about himself/herself or party but only of democracy. He wanted a healthy and honest difference of opinion in democracy.

Gandhi tried to give a democratic orientation to the concept of Swaraj. He believed that the government of the country must be based on the will of the majority of the people which should be ascertained through adult suffrage. The people who elect such Swaraj government should have contributed manual labour to the state. To quote him, "By Swaraj 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."<sup>25</sup> Gandhi accepted parliamentary form of government as the immediate goal of his conception of Swaraj. His Swaraj was the Parliamentary government of India in the modern times. He supported parliamentary Swaraj as the immediate political objective, but also as an ideal to strive for. Basically Gandhi wanted the rule of majority only to the extent that it could be regarded as an expression of the collective social will.

Parliamentary democracy should also be a participatory democracy. This involved a democratic structure of the government in which an individual enjoyed maximum freedom of thought, expression and participated in decision-making

and implementation processes. The people should also be fully competent to retain political power in their hands to reduce the interference of government to a minimum to establish self-government to avoid coercive control. Gandhi sought to build up a democratic structure from the grass-root levels, the self-government (the real Swaraj) by making the masses aware of their power and dignity.

---

## 4.4 ECONOMIC SWARAJ

---

Gandhi believed that India had lost political control due to losing the control over its economy. In his exhaustive treatise 'Hind Swaraj' he devotes a complete chapter '*Why was India lost?*'. This chapter gives an economic argument for the enslavement of India by the British. It further goes on to give Gandhi's vision for a good economic system. Gandhi's concept of Swaraj included economic Swaraj which was not separated from human condition in its totality. For Gandhi political Swaraj would not work without bringing about an economic Swaraj. For Gandhi economic development was related to the concept of Swaraj. Economic dependence does not allow individuals or nations to formulate and take decisions for themselves (Swaraj).

### 4.4.1 Village Decentralization (Gram Swaraj)

Gandhi saw each village as a self-reliant unit. He was more inclined towards development of cottage industries and not large-scale industrialization. He felt a decentralized economy would negate exploitation of labour and corruption. He always espoused that there are abundant resources in nature for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. Gandhi believed that decentralisation was essential for the survival of democracy. Gandhi preferred the decentralisation of small units of production as compared to the setting up of large scale units in few places. He wanted to carry the production units to the homes of the masses, particularly in villages. Cottage and village industries help increasing employment. Commodities can be produced cheaply as there is no need for a separate establishment; very few resources are needed. There is no problem of storage. Transport cost is negligible. Integration of cottage industries with agriculture provides work to the farmers in the off season time. This helped in utilizing all their energies which would have otherwise have been wasted. In fact, these industries are best suited for a rural life. These industries increase the income of the villages and satisfy their basic needs. According to Gandhi this would help in the removal of poverty and unemployment from the villages and also make them self-sufficient economic units.

### 4.4.2 Swadeshi and Khadi

The concept of Gandhi's Swadeshi gave preference to local products even if they are of inferior grade or expensive than things manufactured elsewhere and tried to resolve the problems of local manufacturers. Gandhi's Swadeshi did not imply rejection of all foreign goods just because they are foreign, and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion of manufactures of one's country for which it is not suited. This would be wrong and against the Swadshi spirit. In the Swadeshi economic order there will be healthy exchange of products and not cut-throat competition through the play of market forces. The guiding principle that he laid down in respect of all foreign goods was that those things should not be imported which were likely to prove harmful to the interests of the indigenous industry.

Gandhi found khadi as the necessary and most important corollary of the principle of Swadeshi in its practical application to society. Gandhi stressed the importance of the development of Khadi industry. For Gandhi, khadi was the symbol of unity of Indian humanity of its economic freedom and equality and Swaraj. He believed that the development of Khadi industry would save millions of people from hunger and poverty. Gandhi advocated the use of charkha and the 'Charkha' was considered to be the symbol of non-violence. His slogan was 'Swaraj through spinning'.

#### 4.4.3 Trusteeship

Economic Swaraj for Gandhi also meant an egalitarian society which would further the cause of democracy (political Swaraj). He was against the idea of large fortunes in the hands of few. The rich and entitled should be trustees of the society and use their resources for the welfare of the downtrodden. In this his views had a Marxist orientation. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no importance to capitalism, but gives the present producer/owner class the chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption. It does not recognise any right of private ownership of property except the amount permitted by society for its welfare. It proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, the limit of this minimum wage should be fixed according to the maximum income allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and should vary from time to time so that the tendency would be towards eradication of such difference.

#### 4.4.4 Bread and Labour

Gandhi was influenced by law of bread and labour as put forward by T.M. Bondaref and which was also propounded by Ruskin and Tolstoy. This law emphasises that man must earn his bread (livelihood) by his own labour (work). If all people laboured for their bread, there would be enough food and clothing for all, they would be healthier and happier, and there would be no problem of food shortage, no disease and no misery. He strongly believed that without physical labour no one was entitled to get food. He advised the rich also to do physical labour for earning a livelihood.

Gandhi's perceptions of economic Swaraj were based on self-control and self-restraint by the individual and society as a whole. He was against consumerism and amassing of wealth by individuals, all these he put forward when people practised self-control and restrained their wants and needs. Self-control by the individual as a unit and society collectively was also a key concept of Swaraj or self-control.<sup>26</sup>

---

### 4.5 SOCIAL SWARAJ

---

While elaborating upon social Swaraj Gandhi wanted a state of social existence where each individual irrespective of his/her religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, residence or parentage will enjoy equal social status. Thus, the society shall be an integrated community devoid of any artificial and manmade distinctions. It shall be a society inspired by the spirit of social equality, equality of status and equal dignity of all its members irrespective of a variety of natural and manmade distinctions.

## 4.6 SWARAJ AS SELF-CONTROL

Gandhi championed the cause of individual freedom. According to him Swaraj really means self-control. Only that person is capable of self-control who observes the rules of morality, does not cheat or give up truth, and does his duty to his parents, wife and children, servants and neighbours. Such a man can truly enjoy Swaraj and a nation enjoys Swaraj if it can boast of a large number of such good citizens. An individual Swarajist has to observe eleven vows like truth, non-violence, non-stealing, non-possession, celibacy, fearlessness, manual labour, non-indulgence in food, use of Swadeshi, equal respect for all religions and eradicating untouchability. Gandhi considered individual as an end and as such opposed to servility.

Gandhi believed that Swaraj or true freedom is conformity to moral law, the inner conscience, and the law of one's true being. It induces a person to seek the good and attain it, an end that is worthy. Freedom means self-control, a conquest over self which can be attained only by being fearless. It involves rigorous discipline and requires that one follows one's vows of self-purification and self-realisation. It is through active involvement and participation in the day to day affairs of society that the individual attains salvation or 'moksha'. Gandhi insisted on the need to rationalise and synthesise desires in an integrated life in order to attain the morals necessary to distinguish humans from brutes. Another implication of Swaraj is moral and spiritual freedom or 'anâsakti' which comes as the consequence of will and reason leading to concentration of energy. This was the most important lesson that Gandhi learnt from the 'Bhagavad Gita'.

Swaraj as self-rule or self-control means three things: first freedom is primarily an individual, not a collective quality. Second, it includes the conventional civil liberties of the press, speech, association and religion and third, it distinguishes between inner and outer forms of freedom, inner freedom as anchoring and sustaining outer freedom. For Gandhi, the individual is the pillar of Swaraj but this does not mean unbridled individualism; rather it implies, as explained by T. H. Green, a balance between individual freedom and social restraint. He insisted on individuals cultivating qualities of discipline, voluntary loyalty and solidarity and internal freedom as these would ensure an unimpeachable character and conduct. He constantly emphasised that inactive and weak people would never be able to attain freedom and individual consciousness alone would lift people out of all forms of bondage. Gandhi considered weakness, cowardice and fear as sins against human spirit. He taught the Indians the spirit of fearlessness. Self-rule, self-restraint, self-discipline and voluntary self-sacrifice rooted in the notions of individual autonomy and moral self-determinism formed the basis of his Swaraj. "When Gandhi pursued the political goal of Swaraj (self-rule) he meant to teach himself and Indians, that only those who could rule themselves in the sense of self-restraint could rule themselves in the sense of controlling their political universe"<sup>27</sup>

Gandhi saw an intimate link between Swaraj and Swadeshi or self-reliance. For Gandhi, freedom is rooted in human nature and is to be claimed as part of self-awareness earned through self-effort and conversely, any external threat to human freedom arises not from circumstances outside one's control but by recognising our weaknesses in the first place, which is why he considered self-purification as integral to the concept of Swaraj. This gives the individuals the strength and

capacity to translate the abstract notion of freedom into a practical reality in society and politics. According to Gandhi, a person truly realises freedom if he listens to his conscience or the inner voice, the only tyrant that one should accept. Fearlessness, self-rule, self-restraint, self-discipline, non-attachment, renunciation and voluntary self-sacrifice would make resistance to evil easy and that forms the core of the philosophy of 'Satyagraha'. Gandhi described Satyagraha as the act of the brave and the fearless and through it, "Gandhi turned the moral tables on the English definition of courage by suggesting that aggression was the path to mastery of those without self-control, non-violent resistance the path of those with control"<sup>28</sup>

---

## 4.7 SUMMARY

---

This elaborate explanation of the meaning of Swaraj and the three pillars of Swaraj sums up the entire political philosophy and action of Gandhi. Emphasising on the utmost necessity to have unity in a situation of larger plurality and also with the larger awareness of two Indias, one of the city and another of the village with abject poverty allowed him to portray a more realistic depiction of the Indian reality, much better than attempted by the socialists and the Marxists. To give life and meaning to the concept of Swaraj, Gandhi's formulation of the constructive programme is of supreme importance. It portrays the essential reformative nature of his theories ensuring the minimum resources and environment essential for self-development of every single Indian and as a means of reaching the goal of Swaraj.

Gandhi prefers to use Swaraj instead of the English word, independence or freedom. By Swaraj Gandhi did not mean only political Swaraj. Freedom or Swaraj, for Gandhi, is an inclusive concept-political, economic, social and moral emphasising on the utmost necessity of the human being to be as perfect as possible. Gandhi borrows the term 'Swaraj' from the Vedas. One meaning of Swaraj is self-rule and self-control and differs from the English usage, which implies freedom without restraints. Swaraj for Gandhi also meant positive freedom, to participate in the process of politics in every possible way. It implies participatory democracy as there exists an intimate relationship between the citizen and the state. Gandhi's concern for majority alleviation led him to advance the notion of village decentralization or 'Gram Swaraj' with its focus on the village, at the centre of his social, political and economic philosophy.

---

## 4.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

---

- 1) Explain Gandhi's concept of Swaraj.
- 2) What does Gandhi mean by Swaraj as self-rule?
- 3) Elaborate Gandhi's political, economic and social Swaraj?
- 5) Explain Gandhi's Swaraj as self-control.

---

## 4.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

---

Bandyopadhyaya, J. *Social and Political Thought of Gandhi*. Bombay. Allied Publishers, 1969.

Bhattacharya, B. *Evolution of the Political Philosophy of Gandhi*. Calcutta. Calcutta Book House, 1969.



- Bondurant, J. V. *Conquest of Violence: Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*. Berkeley. University of California Press, 1967.
- Bose, N. K. *Studies in Gandhism*. Ahmedabad. Navajivan Publishing House, 1972.
- Chatterjee, M.. *Gandhi's Religious Thought*. London. Macmillan. 1983.
- Chatterjee, P. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. Delhi. Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Dalton, D. *India's Idea of Freedom*. Gurgaon. Academic Press. 1982.
- Haksar, V. "Rawls and Gandhi on Civil Disobedience". *Inquiry*. 1976.
- Iyer, R. N. *The Moral and Political Thought of Gandhi*. Bombay. Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Kolge, Nishikant and N. Sreekumar. 'Towards a Comprehensive Understanding of Gandhi's Concept of Swaraj: Some Critical Thoughts on Parel's Reading of Swaraj.' *Research Gate*. May 2010. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280082549\\_Towards\\_a\\_Comprehensive\\_Understanding\\_of\\_Gandhi's\\_Concept\\_of\\_Swaraj\\_Some\\_Critical\\_Thoughts\\_on\\_Parel's\\_Reading\\_of\\_Swaraj](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280082549_Towards_a_Comprehensive_Understanding_of_Gandhi's_Concept_of_Swaraj_Some_Critical_Thoughts_on_Parel's_Reading_of_Swaraj).
- Pantham, T and Deutsch, K., (ed). *Political Thought in Modern India*. New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1986.
- Parekh, B. *Gandhi's Political Philosophy*. Notre Dame. Notre Dame University Press, 1989.
- Ray, Alok Kumar. 'Swaraj: The Gandhian Vision'. *Odisha Review*. August, 2015. <http://magazines.odisha.gov.in/Orissareview/2015/August/engpdf/5-9.pdf>.
- Rudolph, L. and Rudolph, S., *The Modernity of Tradition*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1967.
- Shaile, Kriti. 'Economic Ideas of Mahatma Gandhi'. *Economic Discussion*. n.d. <http://www.economicdiscussion.net/articles/economic-ideas-of-mahatma-gandhi/21133>.
- Sharma, Naresh Kumar. 'Reflections on Gandhi's Economic Ideas'. *Mahatma Gandhi*. December, 2010. <https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhi's-economic-ideas.html>.
- Shiya. 'Essay on Gandhi's Views on Swaraj'. *Preserve Articles*. n.d. <http://www.preservearticles.com/201106238412/gandhi-and-swaraj.html>.
- Woodcock, G. *Mohandas Gandhi*. New York. Fontana, 1971.

---

## UNIT 5 SWADESHI\*

---

### Structure

- 5.1 Introduction
  - Aims and Objectives*
- 5.2 Swadeshi: Self-Reliance
- 5.3 Swadeshi: An Economic Philosophy
- 5.4 Village Economy
- 5.5 Swadeshi Movement
- 5.6 Khadi: Symbol of Economic Sufficiency
- 5.7 Swadeshi: A Religious Idea
- 5.8 Summary
- 5.9 Terminal Questions
- 5.10 Suggested Readings

---

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

---

The word 'swadesi' is derived from Sanskrit and is a sandhi or conjunction of two Sanskrit words. 'Swa' means 'self' or 'own' and 'desa' means country, so 'swadesa' means 'own country', and 'swadesi', the adjectival form, means 'of one's own country'. The opposite of 'swadesi' in Sanskrit is 'videsi' or 'not of one's country'. The word Swadeshi had many connotations in Gandhi's thoughts-economic, political, cultural and philosophical. It is central to Gandhi's philosophy, which in effect, means self-sufficiency.

Swadeshi was one of the most important pillars of Gandhi's movement against the British in India. He propagated that economic Swaraj is essential for political Swaraj. Gandhi believed that India had lost political control due to losing the control over its economy. In his exhaustive treatise 'Hind Swaraj' he devotes a complete chapter '*Why was India lost?*'. This chapter gives an economic argument for the enslavement of India by the British. It further goes on to give Gandhi's vision for a good economic system. Gandhi's concept of Swaraj included economic Swaraj which was not separated from human condition in its totality. For Gandhi political Swaraj would not work without bringing about an economic Swaraj. For Gandhi economic development was related to the concept of Swaraj. Economic dependence does not allow individuals or nations to formulate and take decisions for themselves (Swaraj).

Swadeshi as a movement encouraged domestic production of commodities and boycott of foreign goods. In a political sense it defended indigenous institutions. In religion it meant protection of one's ancestral religion and traditions. Gandhi was in favour of keeping all the good from these spheres and keeping away the defects. The revitalization of the spirit and soul of India was essential to promote national unity. In this Gandhi was wholly inspired by the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayananda.

---

\*Suruchi Aggarwal, H-6A Panchsheel Vihar, Nr. D.D.A. Flats, Khirki Extn., New Delhi

Gandhi considered that much of the deep poverty of the masses was due to the ruinous departure from Swadeshi in the economic and industrial life. In the spirit of Swadeshi, Gandhi's idea of economy is self-supportive and self-contained. Swadeshi, as a strategy, was a key focus of Gandhi and he described it as the soul of Swaraj (self-rule). Swadeshi was a concept formulated in search of making a nation against the colonial British India. Swadeshi assigned national meaning to territory, economy and culture. Swadeshi movement swept through India and it was a common sight in cities and villages to see women burning their sarees made out of imported material and breaking their beloved glass bangles as they were manufactured in Britain. These raging bonfires heralded the beginning of the end of the British Empire in India.

Swadeshi movement aimed to achieve Swaraj by establishing India's economic self-sufficiency from Britain. This unit explores the various facets of the Gandhi's idea of Swadeshi and its relevance in the contemporary world. The contemporary world today is market-centred, greedy and everything is commercialized. In the times of globalization, the philosophy of Swadeshi is inspiring in protecting one's own economy and identity.

### *Aims and Objectives*

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- Gandhi's concept and meaning of Swadeshi
- The meaning of Swadeshi as an economic philosophy
- Swadeshi as a means of revitalizing the village economy
- Khadi as a symbol of economic sufficiency
- Swadeshi as a religious concept

## **5.2 SWADESHI: SELF-RELIANCE (IN DEFENCE OF INDIGENOUS LIFE)**

Generally, the idea of Swadeshi in Gandhian philosophy means local self-reliance and use of local knowledge and abilities. Swadeshi (Self-reliance) is mainly understood to mean a protectionist technique that Gandhi employed against the mercantile policies of the British, whereby the masses were urged to abstain from cloth manufactured outside India, and instead to use cotton, silk, or wool cloth made in India. But Gandhi gives it a broader meaning: Swadeshi carries a great and profound meaning. It does not mean merely the use of what is produced in one's own country. That meaning is certainly there in Swadeshi, but there is another meaning implied in it which is far greater and much more important. Swadeshi means reliance on our own strength. Reliance on our own strength means the strength of our body, our mind, and our soul.

Gandhi believed that alienation and exploitation often occur when production and consumption are far removed from their social and cultural context, and that local enterprise is a way to avoid these problems. To renew India's vitality and regenerate its culture, Gandhi had a vision of free India that was not a nation-state but a confederation of self-governing, self-reliant, self-employed people living in village communities, deriving their right livelihood from the products of their homesteads. Maximum economic and political power-including the power

to decide what could be imported into or exported from the village-would remain in the hands of the village assemblies. Gandhi believed that in India, people have lived for thousands of years in relative harmony with their surroundings: living in their homesteads, weaving homespun clothes, eating homegrown food, using home-made goods; caring for their animals, forests, and lands; celebrating the fertility of the soil with feasts; performing the stories of great epics, and building temples. In defense of the concept of Swadeshi Gandhi said that, "although it is inclusive and appears to serve India to the exclusion of every other country, it is certainly not competitive or antagonist in nature."<sup>29</sup>

---

### **5.3 SWADESHI: AN ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY**

---

Gandhi's Swadeshi is an economic doctrine. It proposes not only self-reliance and usage of indigenous skills and knowledge systems, but also propagates simple living and one's own dignity. In the times of globalization, market-oriented and commercialized life, Swadeshi has its contemporary relevance. Gandhi's idea of Swadeshi deals about the importance of indigenous skills and its productivity. He believed that Swadeshi is means in realizing the self-reliance and self-governance (Swaraj). In that sense his politics of spirituality has not only internalized the essence of material production and labour, but also proves that he is a pragmatic philosopher. The practice of economic philosophy of Swadeshi had direct hit on British Empire and its economy.

Gandhi did not stop at just proposing the ideas of the Swadeshi movement but gave practical ideas to be followed in day to day living-khadi, village decentralization, trusteeship, bread and labour etc. It is not as if Gandhi was against science and technology. He accepted that the use of articles manufactured only in India could have limitations. He was of the view that exclusion of foreign goods did not mean forsaking everything essential. He himself admitted that he bought useful and healthy literature from all over the world. He agreed that surgical instruments made in England were required, similarly, pins and pencils from Austria and watches from Switzerland. Yet, he would never buy cotton fabric from England or Japan. Anything which is produced in India and consumed by Indians benefits the masses of India. Gandhi said, "A certain degree of physical comfort is necessary but above a certain level it becomes a hindrance instead of a help; therefore the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them, seems to be a delusion and a trap. The satisfaction of one's physical needs must come at a certain point to a dead stop before it degenerates into physical decadence."<sup>30</sup>

---

### **5.4 VILLAGE ECONOMY**

---

The British believed in centralized, industrialized, and mechanized modes of production. Gandhi on the other hand believed in a decentralized, homegrown, hand-crafted mode of production. He said, "Not mass production, but production by the masses." Mass production is only concerned with the product, whereas production by the masses is concerned with the product, the producers, and the process. In Gandhi's Swadeshi economy, village economy and local industry (cottage industries) played an important role. He aimed at self-sufficiency of the village community. According to his principle of Swadeshi, whatever is made or produced in the village must be used first and foremost by the members of the village. Swadeshi meant avoiding economic dependence on external market forces

that would make the village community vulnerable. It also meant avoiding unnecessary, unhealthy, wasteful, and therefore environmentally destructive production methods. The village must build a strong economic base to satisfy most of its needs, and all members of the village community should give priority to local goods and services. Every village community of free India should have its own carpenters, shoemakers, potters, builders, mechanics, farmers, engineers, weavers, teachers, bankers, merchants, traders, musicians, artists, and priests. In other words, each village should be a microcosm of India—a web of loosely interconnected communities. Gandhi considered these villages so important that he thought they should be called village republics. The village community according to him should be an extension of the family rather than a group 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 saw each village as a self-reliant unit. He was more inclined towards development of cottage industries and not large-scale industrialization. He felt a decentralized economy would negate exploitation of labour and corruption. He always espoused that there are abundant resources in nature for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed. Gandhi believed that decentralisation was essential for the survival of democracy. Gandhi preferred the decentralisation of small units of production as compared to the setting up of large scale units in few places. He wanted to carry the production units to the homes of the masses, particularly in villages. Cottage and village industries help increasing employment. Commodities can be produced cheaply as there is no need for a separate establishment; very few resources are needed. There is no problem of storage. Transport cost is negligible. Integration of cottage industries with agriculture provides work to the farmers in the off season time. This helped in utilizing all their energies which would otherwise have been wasted. In fact, these industries are best suited for a rural life. These industries increase the income of the villages and satisfy their basic needs. According to Gandhi this would help in the removal of poverty and unemployment from the villages and also make them self-sufficient economic units.

Gandhi wanted the people to adopt the principle of production by the masses, as through this method village communities would be able to restore dignity to the work done by human hands. There is an intrinsic value in anything we do with our hands, and in handing over work to machines we lose not only the material benefits but also the spiritual benefits, for work by hand brings with it a meditative mind and self-fulfillment. Gandhi believed that with the continuous use of artificial machinery people will forget the use of their hands. They will become weak and dependent on these machines and it would be a grave tragedy.

Gandhi strongly believed that a locally based economy would enhance community spirit, community relationships, and community well-being. Such an economy would encourage mutual cooperation. Mass production leads people to leave their villages, their land, their crafts, and their homesteads and go to work in the factories. Instead of become self-sufficient, dignified human beings and members of a self-respecting village community, people become cogs in the machine, standing at the conveyor belt, living in shanty towns, and depending on the mercy of their rich employers.

According to Gandhi, when every individual becomes an integral part of the community; when the production of goods is on a small scale; when the economy

is local; and when homemade handicrafts are given preference, it is the real Swadeshi. These conditions are conducive to a holistic, spiritual, ecological, and communitarian pattern of society. "My idea of village swaraj (self-rule) is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity."<sup>31</sup>

---

## 5.5 SWADESHI MOVEMENT

---

Initially the idea of Swadeshi was reflected in the writings of early nationalists such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Bipin Chandra Pal, who stood up in defense of the national economy against the colonial economy. The Swadeshi movement assumed its radical and mass form after 1905 following the partition of Bengal. In 1907, Swadeshi was officially incorporated within the conceptual and ideological framework of the Indian National Congress as the avowed objective of Swadeshi and Swaraj. The partition of Bengal created widespread resentment all over the country. In this tense atmosphere people started boycotting foreign made goods and British institutions, and thus began the Swadeshi movement. Historically Swadeshi was linked to the other categories such as national economy, territory and culture. Swadeshi literally meaning one's own country, aimed at the promotion of indigenous industries. Along with Swadeshi, the boycott of British goods was organized. The Swadeshi and boycott were powerful instruments directed against foreign rule. The nationalists along with the masses wanted to attack the British rule where it would hurt them the most. About Swadeshi, Lajpat Rai said, "I regard it as a salvation of my country. The Swadeshi movement ought to teach us how to organize our capital, resources, labour, energies, talents for the greatest good of all Indians irrespective of creed, colour or caste. It ought to unite us, our religious and denominational differences notwithstanding. In my opinion, Swadeshi ought to be the common religion of united India."<sup>32</sup> He explained that boycott struck at the prestige of the British government.

In Gandhi's 'Hind Swaraj' of 1909 Swaraj, Satyagraha and Swadeshi are key principles. To realize the Swaraj, Gandhi believed that the ideal of Swadeshi was necessary in every sense. Gandhi took Swadeshi to another level by making it a powerful political movement with mobilization of masses. Gandhi created a new form of Swadeshi politics that encouraged the production and exclusive consumption of 'Khadi'. Gandhi's Swadeshi is a call to the consumers to be aware of the destruction he/she is causing by supporting those industries that are forerunners in causing poverty, harm to workers and to humans and other creatures. Indian nationalists believed that the cause of their economic woes were wholly due to the British colonization of India. Swadeshi was a nationalist movement to boycott British goods and to buy Indian goods.

Historically, the Indian local economy was dependent upon the most productive and sustainable agriculture and horticulture and on pottery, furniture making, metal work, jewellery, leather work, and many other economic activities. But its base had traditionally been in textiles. Each village had its spinners, carders, dyers, and weavers who were the heart of the village economy. However, when India was flooded with machine-made, inexpensive, mass-produced textiles from Lancashire (England), the local textile artists were rapidly put out of business, and the village economy suffered terribly. Gandhi thought it essential that the industry be restored, and started a campaign to stop the influx of the British

cloth. Due to his efforts, hundreds of thousands of untouchables and caste Hindus joined together to discard the mill-made clothes imported from England or from city factories and learned to spin their own yarn and weave their own cloth. The spinning wheel became the symbol of economic freedom, political independence, and cohesive and classless communities. The weaving and wearing of homespun cloth became a mark of distinction for all social groups.

---

## **5.6 KHADI: A SYMBOL OF ECONOMIC SUFFICIENCY**

---

The term Swadeshi had both economic and political dimensions in India's struggle against British colonialism. For Gandhi, it was centered on handspun khaddar and extended to everything that could be produced indigenously by rural masses. 'Khadi' emerged as a symbol of Swadeshi. The Swadeshi workers explained the significance of khadi to the people of nation through various forms. Khadi was portrayed as the material artifact of the nation, which is a traditional product and produced by traditional means. Gandhi's nationalist movement made khadi an exhaustive concept by defining its significance in terms of contemporary politics and economics of Swadeshi. The propagators of Swadeshi effectively transformed a common object of everyday life, homespun, home-woven cloth, into the absolute symbol of the Indian community. Khadi became a visual symbol as it marked individual bodies as distinctly Indian in relation to visual symbols of regional, religious, caste and class identification. Khadi became both a symbol of India's potential economic self-sufficiency and an effective medium for communicating to the British the dignity of the Indians and the unity among them.

The concept of Gandhi's Swadeshi gave preference to local products even if they are of inferior grade or expensive than things manufactured elsewhere and tried to resolve the problems of local manufacturers. Gandhi's Swadeshi did not imply rejection of all foreign goods just because they are foreign, and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion of manufactures of one's country for which it is not suited. This would be wrong and against the Swadeshi spirit. In the Swadeshi economic order there will be healthy exchange of products and not cut-throat competition through the play of market forces. The guiding principle that he laid down in respect of all foreign goods was that those things should not be imported which were likely to prove harmful to the interests of the indigenous industry.

Gandhi found khadi as the necessary and most important corollary of the principle of Swadeshi in its practical application to society. Gandhi stressed the importance of the development of Khadi industry. For Gandhi, khadi was the symbol of unity of Indian humanity of its economic freedom and equality and Swaraj. He believed that the development of Khadi industry would save millions of people from hunger and poverty. Gandhi advocated the use of charkha and the 'Charkha' was considered to be the symbol of non-violence. His slogan was 'Swaraj through spinning'.

---

## **5.7 SWADESHI: A RELIGIOUS IDEA**

---

Gandhi linked up his idea of Swadeshi to religion. Swadeshi according to him was not an isolated economic and political principle of his philosophy. It was very much connected to his philosophy of spiritualism and religion. Gandhi

considered economic Swadeshi not as a boycott movement undertaken because of revenge, but as a religious principle to be followed by all. Swadeshi, he believed was a religious principle to be undertaken with complete disregard to the physical discomfort caused to individuals. A person conforming to the ideas of Swadeshi will learn to do without a hundred things which today he considers necessary. According to Gandhi, Swadeshi in religion teaches one to measure the glorious past and re-enact it in the present generation. He explained that the chaos that was going on in Europe at the time showed that modern civilization represented forces of evil and darkness, whereas the ancient, i.e., the Indian civilization, represented in its essence, the divine force. Modern civilization was chiefly materialistic, destructive, as compared to the Indian civilization which was chiefly spiritual. Swadeshi is intimately related to Hindu religion. For Gandhi, Hindu religion was inclusive, tolerant and reformatory. In that sense Gandhi's Swadeshi withholds the tradition of Hindu religion.<sup>33</sup>

---

## 5.8 SUMMARY

---

One of the most important concepts of Gandhi's political views is the concept of Swadeshi. The word 'Swadeshi' literally means 'belonging to one's own country'. Gandhi also means, more or less, the same thing by this word and yet this word has assumed in Gandhi's thought a special significance simply on the account of the emphasis that has been laid on it and also on account of its very comprehensive use. Gandhi has applied this notion in almost every sphere of life-social, political and economic. Ordinarily Gandhi's interpretation of the Swadeshi is given a political colour and is taken as the basis of 'Nationalism'. But, Gandhi's Swadeshi has both a positive and negative sense. Positively it provides a political and economic principle which can be viewed as having a nationalist tinge, negatively it gives out a basis for inter-nationalism.

The broad meaning of Swadeshi is 'the use of all homemade things to the exclusion of foreign things'. But, this is too broad a definition of Swadeshi as the use of homemade things to the exclusion of foreign things is recommended only under one condition, only when such a use is necessary for the protection and growth of home industry. If the use of foreign things is beneficial, and does not adversely affect the cottage industry, then, Swadeshi will not be insisted upon. Gandhi was aware that even Swadeshi, like any other good thing, 'can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish'. That is a danger that must be avoided. To reject foreign manufacturers merely because they are foreign and to go on wasting national time and money in trying to promote such manufactures for which the country is not suited would be a folly and a negation of the spirit of Swadeshi.

Swadeshi, therefore, is not a narrow parochial doctrine, on the other hand, it is based on the recognition of human limitations and capacity for work and service. We have to provide food, work and employment to our immediate neighbours, and therefore, we shall have to work for what can guarantee these to all of us. The doctrine of Swadeshi, therefore, is a doctrine employed for the protection of indigenous industries. It, in no way, suggests that the use of foreign goods must be discarded at all cost.

Swadeshi is one of the central principles of Gandhi's philosophy. Gandhi realized Swaraj through Swadeshi. Swadeshi was an ideal concept of totalizing territorial nativism by connecting national economy, territory and culture. Gandhi's



Swadeshi is always in defense of indigenous skills, local knowledge systems, cultural traditions and village economy. Swadeshi meant self-sufficiency of the home through revitalization in all its aspects. Through Swadeshi, Gandhi was successful in uniting the economic struggles with nationalist movement. Gandhi envisaged an organic and political society characterized by economic self-sufficiency and social harmony. The Swadeshi worker not only symbolizes charkha and khadi but also lives in simplicity and spirituality. In Gandhi's Swadeshi, economics would have a place but would not dominate society. The Swadeshi economics is based on the principle of non-possessiveness, whereas capitalism is based on possessiveness. It is believed that beyond a certain limit, economic growth becomes detrimental to human well-being. Gandhi's principle of Swadeshi has much relevance in the contemporary times of globalization.

---

## 5.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

---

- 1) Discuss various connotations of Swadeshi in the philosophy of Gandhi.
- 2) Critically evaluate the economic philosophy of Gandhi.
- 3) Write a note on village economy of Gandhi
- 6) Discuss the principles of Swadeshi and its relevance in contemporary times.
- 6) Write a short note on:
  - a) Khadi Industry
  - b) Swadeshi Movement

---

## 5.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

---

'Gospel of Swadeshi'. *Mahatma Gandhi's Speeches and Writings*. pp. 336-44. n.d. <https://www.mkgandhi.org/indiadreams/chap31.htm>.

Andrews, C.F. 'Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas, including Selections From His Writings'. pp.118-130.

Diwan, Romesh. 'The Economics of Love; Or an Attempt at Gandhian Economics', *Journal of Economic Issues*. Vol.XVI ,No. 2 June, 1982. pp. 413-433.

Gandhi, M.K. 'Swadeshi'. *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Vol.6. Navjivan Publishing House. 1968. pp.336-339.

Goswamy, Manu. 'From Swadeshi to Swaraj: Nation, Economy and Territory in Colonial South Asia 1870-1907'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol.40, No.4 (October 1998). pp. 609-636.

Iyer, Raghavan. (Ed.) *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1990.

Iyer, Raghavan. *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1986.

Joseph, Silby K. 'Understanding Gandhi's Vision of Swadeshi'. *Mahatma Gandhi's Speeches and Writings*. n.d. <https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/understanding-gandhis-vision-of-swadeshi.html>.

**Gandhi's Political Concerns**

Kumar, Basant Lal. *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*. New Delhi. Motilal Banarsidass. 2017.

Kumar, Satish. *Gandhi's Swadeshi-The Economics of Permanence The Case Against the Global Economy - and For a Turn Toward the Local*. Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith (Eds). <http://squat.net/caravan/ICC-en/Krrs-en/ghandi-econ-en.htm>.

Trivedi, Lisa N. 'Visually Mapping the Nation: Swadeshi Politics in Nationalist India: 1920-1930'. *Journal of South Asian Studies*. Vol.62. No.1 (February 2003). pp.11-41.

Verinder Grover (ed). *Political Thinkers of Modern India; Lala Lajpat Rai*. New Delhi. South Asia Books. 1993.



ignou  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY

---

## UNIT 6 SATYAGRAHA\*

---

### Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
  - Aims and Objectives*
- 6.2 Concept of Satyagraha
- 6.3 Sources of the Idea of Satyagraha
- 6.4 Satyagraha vs Duragraha
- 6.5 Superiority of Satyagraha to Passive Resistance
- 6.6 Satyagraha opposed to Militant Nationalism
- 6.7 Satyagrahi's Code of Conduct
- 6.8 Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience and Non-Cooperation
- 6.9 Satyagraha Movement in British India
  - 6.9.1 Champaran Satyagraha
  - 6.9.2 Kheda/Kaira Satyagraha
  - 6.9.3 Ahmedabad Mill Workers' Strike
  - 6.9.4 Bardoli Satyagraha
  - 6.9.5 Salt Satyagraha
  - 6.9.6 Individual Satyagraha
- 6.10 Satyagraha in the French and Portuguese India
- 6.11 Satyagraha Legacy outside India
- 6.12 Contemporary Relevance
- 6.13 Summary
- 6.14 Terminal Questions
- 6.15 Suggested Readings

---

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

---

Gandhi's years in South Africa exposed him to the evils of apartheid. He experienced firsthand, the pain and humiliation the blacks suffered at the hands of the white colonists. For him the whites were able to dominate the blacks in their own country because they faced no resistance. Gandhi began a movement in South Africa to change the conditions as he believed that their demands were truthful and just. His associate Maganlal Gandhi suggested the term 'Sadagraha' which meant firmness in a good cause. Gandhi changed it to 'Satyagraha'. The word 'Sat' implies openness, honesty and fairness, truth. 'The word 'Satya' (Truth), is derived from Sat, which means being and nothing is or exists in reality except truth. Satyagraha literally means insistence on truth.

Gandhi's Satyagraha experiment began in South Africa in 1907. The non-white immigrants were expected to register themselves in the Registrar of Asiatics and the government issued a certificate of registration with their identity and fingerprints. Failure to comply with the regulation resulted in forfeiture of their right to live in Transvaal and the defaulter was liable to a fine of 100 pounds and

---

\* Suruchi Aggarwal, H-6A Panchsheel Vihar, Nr. D.D.A. Flats, Khirki Extn., New Delhi

deportation. Gandhi was determined to oppose this black ordinance and goaded the Indians not to submit to the ordinance if it became law. While speaking before 3,000 Indians gathered at a theatre in Johannesburg on September 11, 1906, Gandhi organized a strategy of non-violent resistance to oppose racist policies of the South African Government. Thus, Satyagraha was born and since then, it has been adopted by many around the world to resist social injustice and oppression.

For Gandhi Satyagraha was not just a political struggle but a moral struggle too with courage for truth. It had deep ideological values. Gandhi achieved notable success in South Africa through his methods. He returned to India in the latter-half of 1915 and plunged into national politics. The emergence of Gandhi in the Indian political scene and his 'Satyagraha' movement turned it into a vigorous and successful mass movement, which eventually freed India from the clutches of the European colonial rule.

### ***Aims and Objectives***

After studying the unit, you will be able to understand:

- The philosophy of 'Satyagraha' and its political and socio-economic dimensions.
- Satyagraha as an attempt to achieve a silent, non-violent revolution.
- The difference between 'Satyagraha' and 'Passive Resistance'.
- Course of the Satyagraha movement in British India.
- Satyagraha legacy outside India and its contemporary relevance.

---

## **6.2 CONCEPT OF SATYAGRAHA**

---

According to Gandhi Satyagraha was one of the most powerful methods of direct action a Satyagrahi (practitioner of Satyagraha) can resort to. A Satyagrahi will therefore constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly before everybody, who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagraha. He further elaborated that his experiences had taught him that a law of progression applies to every righteous or just struggle. But in the case of Satyagraha the law amounts to an axiom. As a Satyagraha struggle progresses onward, many other elements help to increase its force and worth, and there is a constant growth in the results to which it leads. This is really inevitable, and is bound up with the first principles of Satyagraha.

---

## **6.3 SOURCES OF THE IDEAS OF SATYAGRAHA**

---

Satyagraha was based on the twin principles of Truth and Ahimsa (non-violence), which were the founding principle of Gandhi's political ideology. These were also based on theological tenets of Jainism, Buddhism, Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita. The Upanishads declare that the entire world rests on the bedrock of 'satya' or truth. Buddha gave mankind the message of Ahimsa or non-violence and maintained that hatred could be overcome not by hatred but by love. Mahavira held ahimsa as the highest form of religion. The Hindu mythology abounds in stories, especially of Raja Harishchandra, extolling the virtue of holding on to

truth, through thick and thin. Philosophy of Socrates and teachings of Jesus Christ too are based on perfect Satyagraha. The Christian dictum, “Resist no evil; if anybody smite your right cheek, show him the left also”, became the guiding principle of the Gandhi’s Satyagraha. Gandhi gave this concept a new shape and philosophy and converted it into a new weapon against evil.

---

## **6.4 SATYAGRAHA VS DURAGRAHA**

---

Gandhi contrasted Satyagraha (holding on to truth) with ‘Duragraha’ (holding on by force), as in protest meant more to harass than enlighten opponents. He wrote: “There must be no impatience, no barbarity, no insolence, no undue pressure. If we want to cultivate a true spirit of democracy, we cannot afford to be intolerant. Intolerance betrays want of faith in one’s cause.”<sup>34</sup>

---

## **6.5 SUPERIORITY OF SATYAGRAHA TO PASSIVE RESISTANCE**

---

Gandhi had been much impressed by the thoughts of Leo Tolstoy and Thoreau about passive resistance. Yet, he felt that the concept of passive resistance was too narrow. Passive resistance was aimed at embarrassing the opponent into submission. Satyagraha on the other hand appealed to the opponent’s heart and changed it by the suffering of the self. In passive resistance there was no place for the love of the opponent. In Satyagraha there was no ill-will or hatred as the movement was to root out evil and not the evil-doer. Passive resistance was static while Satyagraha was dynamic.

---

## **6.6 SATYAGRAHA OPPOSED TO MILITANT NATIONALISM**

---

Gandhi believed that change in the polity or society is to be brought about by changing the hearts and minds of men and not by bloody revolutions. Since every individual has a conscience, Gandhi aimed at its awakening, not through violent means, but, by stressing on self-purification and moral influence. He was convinced that through Satyagraha the change of heart can be made possible. The Indian youth did not agree with Gandhi’s theories and preferred to adopt more violent means to achieve freedom from the colonial rule quickly. They felt that the moderate strategy of pleas, petitions and prayers had failed. Gandhi was against this and emphasized that, “Brute-force is not natural to Indian soil, so a person will have to wholly rely on soul-force. One must not consider that violence is necessary at any stage for reaching one’s goal.”<sup>35</sup>

Though he accepted and acknowledged the patriotic spirit of extremists and their craving for right to self-determination and admired their spirit of sacrifice for the sake of their motherland, he disapproved of their violent activities and believed that the extremists would complicate rather than clear the mess that the Indians were in under the alien rule. As an alternative, he suggested ahimsa and Satyagraha, non-violent mass movement to face the all-powerful British Raj. He believed that ahimsa is the weapon of the strong and a true Satyagrahi is handling a more lethal weapon than the extremists.

---

## 6.7 SATYAGRAHI'S CODE OF CONDUCT

---

Satyagraha is fundamentally a way of life, which guides the modes of political activism undertaken by the Satyagrahis. On an individual level, it involves a life committed to truth, chastity, non-attachment and hard-work. On the political front, Satyagraha involves utilization of non-violent measures to curb the opponent, and ideally to convert him rather than to coerce him into submission. A Satyagrahi wants to make the evil-doers see the evil that they are indulging into, and realize the injustice they are committing. It involves encouraging them into acceptance of the right, and if that fails, then at least to stop them from obstructing the right. Picketing, non-cooperation, peaceful marches and meetings, along with a peaceful disobedience of the laws of the land were typical modes of resistance adopted by Satyagrahis.

A true Satyagrahi had to resist and bear all hardships, including physical assault with patience, not ever stooping to anger, and to defend the faith even at the cost of one's life. Satyagrahis had to have extreme inner strength and moral courage in order to do that. Satyagrahis needed to maintain a pure and simple life. Gandhi made his own life a veritable example of his teachings, and also turned his ashram at Sabarmati as a haven for individuals who chose to maintain a life based on his teachings. Violence of all forms was to be resisted and refrained from. Abuses and swearing were strictly prohibited and all forms of abstinence from sensual pleasures was highly advocated. Everyone was meant to work for his or her food and the clothes, which Gandhi called bread-labour. Wearing Khadi and leading a simple life was prescribed. Absolute secularism and eradication of every shade of untouchability were also distinct characteristics of his Satyagraha. Through this, Gandhi believed that the Indians would be strong enough to tread the paths of a truly non-violent revolution.

“It is never the intention of a Satyagrahi to embarrass the wrongdoer. The appeal is never to his fear; it is, must be, always to his heart. The Satyagrahi's object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrongdoer. Gandhi envisioned Satyagraha as not only a tactic to be used in acute political struggle, but as a universal solvent for injustice and harm. He felt that it was equally applicable to large-scale political struggle and to one-on-one interpersonal conflicts and that it should be taught to everyone.

---

## 6.8 SATYAGRAHA, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AND NON-COOPERATION

---

Civil disobedience and non-cooperation as practiced under Satyagraha are based on the 'law of suffering', a doctrine that the endurance of suffering is a means to an end. This end implies a moral upliftment or progress of an individual or society. Therefore, non-cooperation in Satyagraha is a means to secure the cooperation of the opponent consistently with truth and justice. Gandhi sincerely believed that 'non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good'. Pacifism, civil disobedience, rightful resistance against wrong policies, passive resistance, non-cooperation are some of the forms of non-violent struggles Gandhi brought into practice. All these terms come under the common term 'Satyagraha'.

## 6.9 SATYAGRAHA MOVEMENTS IN BRITISH INDIA

The British Government appointed the Rowlatt Commission to give recommendations regarding administration of justice in India. The Committee recommended restrictions on civil liberties in India. Consequently, the Imperial Legislative Council passed two bills, one provided for the arrest and detention of persons involved in anarchical activities, the other made the possession of seditious literature a crime. The Rowlatt Bills had granted sweeping powers of preventive detention or enforced residence on all suspected political agitators. This was received with dismay by every section of Indian public opinion.

Gandhi initially requested the Viceroy to withhold his assent for the 'black bills', but on the latter's failure, he galvanized mass support for this act of defiance; he proclaimed April 6 Satyagraha Day, a day of 'hartal' (suspension of all business), fasting, mass meetings to protest against the hated legislation. The non-cooperation evoked a widespread response. The people were denied their freedom of expression, freedom of association, right to religion and other such fundamental freedoms. On April 13, 1919, people who congregated in the Jallianwala Bagh for a peaceful gathering were fired upon by the British army officer General Dyer. This massacre, termed by Nehru as "a long horror and terrible indignity", resulted in the loss of 1,202 lives and left 3,600 wounded and some permanently disabled.

The popular movement started becoming violent in different parts of the country. This made Gandhi realize the need for teaching the people the art and techniques of civil disobedience and Satyagraha and launched a massive training programme.

### 6.9.1 Champaran Satyagraha

Under the Tinkathia system the peasants of Champaran in Bihar were bound by law to grow indigo on 3/20<sup>th</sup> of their land and sell it to the British planters at prices arbitrarily fixed by the latter. They were liable to unlawful extraction and oppression by the planters. Gandhi systematically enquired into their grievances and took up their cause. His activities forced the local administration to appoint a committee of inquiry and as a result, Champaran Agrarian Bill and a subsequent Act was passed protecting the interests of the poor peasants.

### 6.9.2 Kheda/ Kaira Satyagraha

The crops had failed in Kaira district of Gujarat in 1918 but the British officers insisted on full collection of land revenue. Gandhi organized the peasants to take up Satyagraha and encouraged them to refuse to pay taxes and to suffer all consequences. Even those who could afford to pay declined to pay as a matter of principle, despite all threats of coercion. The government was forced to yield to the pressure and to arrive at a settlement with the peasants.

### 6.9.3 Ahmedabad Mill Worker's Strike

Gandhi led the mill-workers of Ahmedabad in a strike against the mill-owners who had refused to pay them higher wages and exploited them severely. He rallied them by undertaking a fast and this united all so firmly that the mill-

owners gave in on the fourth day of the fast and agreed to a 35 per cent wage increase.

#### **6.9.4 Bardoli Satyagraha**

The Bardoli Satyagraha was led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and this was an important movement with non-violence as its hallmark. In 1928, the taluka contained 137 villages with some parts of it rich in crops like cotton, rice etc. The peasants of the region were agitated by a large increase in land revenue announced by the British government. The non-violent movement started after two years of petitioning and protesting. The peasants moved a resolution on non-payment of taxes until the government considered withdrawing the increase in revenue. Large number of men and women participated in this Satyagraha movement. They were threatened by the government that their land would be forfeited. An iron will is said to have prevailed in Bardoli where village headmen and the subordinate officers resigned in large numbers. After a four-month agitation and a spate of observations, threats of arrests and continuous assessment of situation, peace was opted for and led to the reinstatement of the headmen and release of arrested Satyagrahis. Following a careful scrutiny of official records and taking stock of the situation, the government annulled the increase which they had tried to enforce at any cost. The leadership abilities of Patel were recognized by one and all and earned him much respect and he was called a true disciple of Gandhi.

#### **6.9.5 Salt Satyagraha**

The British decided to take the Indian salt back to Britain and refine it and repackage it and sell it back to the Indian people at about twenty times the price. The enormous taxes imposed on salt, an essential commodity that everybody needs every day, was perceived by one and all as totally unjust, and Gandhi decided to defy the salt tax. He decided to break the infamous salt law as it affected everybody, Hindus and Muslims, rich and poor. Gandhi calculated that the movement against the oppressive salt law would unite the people irrespective of their religion, region or economic status.

Salt Satyagraha was organized in 1930, when Gandhi announced to the nation that he was going to defy the salt laws enacted by the British and thus defy the British government. Gandhi began the Dandi march, 247 miles to the sea, on March 12, 1930. This caught the imagination of the people and millions poured out into the streets; the response was so tremendous that the Congress doubters also began to see the wisdom of it, and the British government was taken completely by surprise. It turned out to be a turning point in the freedom struggle in India. Gandhi's Satyagraha reached the pinnacle of success, and Indian Nationalist movement reached a feverish pitch, forcing the government to initiate procedures towards the Gandhi-Irwin pact, followed by the Second Round Table Conference, where Gandhi gave one of his greatest speeches exposing the evils of the British rule and endorsing the methods of Satyagraha.

#### **6.9.6 Individual Satyagraha**

From his experience, Gandhi understood that every individual is not fit to be a 'Satyagrahi' by inclination and temperament and so, there was virtual need for training and conditioning. He was aghast with the mass violence in retaliation of



use of force by the state agencies like police. As such, in October 1940, when he thought of launching a fresh Satyagraha movement, it was decided that the campaign should be limited to selected individuals who were trained to be Satyagrahis. To his credit, Vinoba Bhave was selected by Gandhi to be the first leader to offer Satyagraha. Satyagraha by that time has gained wide popularity, and there were committed Satyagrahis all over the country. Quit India Movement reclaimed the ideals of Satyagraha, which finally went a long way in securing Indian independence by August 15, 1947.

---

## **6.10 SATYAGRAHA IN THE FRENCH AND PORTUGUESE INDIA**

---

After India achieved independence from British in August, 1947 people of French held India, such as Pondicherry began to agitate for their own independence. This was also true for the people of Goa who were under Portuguese rule. Though, initially Gandhi was against people's agitation in French held territories as he thought they were in favour of violence. Later on, he was upraised of the correct situation and went on to support Satyagraha in these areas. Even after Gandhi's demise in 1948 the leaders and participants of freedom movement in French India imbibed the ideals of Gandhi and fought against the French colonial rule. The Gandhian non-violent movement with a popular base and participation subsequently achieved independence from the French colonial rule as the French Indian problem was solved amicably through peaceful negotiation between France and India by 1954.

Similarly in Goa the people adopted Gandhi's mode of agitation including hartal and non-cooperation. The Portuguese government was brutal in suppressing these movements. Yet, by 1960 they achieved success and with Jawaharlal Nehru's support Goa too became a part of the Indian nation.

---

## **6.11 SATYAGRAHA LEGACY OUTSIDE INDIA**

---

Satyagraha gained wide acceptance around the world as a more potent tool of resistance than armed violence. Satyagraha legacy was carried on long after Gandhi. Martin Luther King used it in his battle against racism and also used the term 'soul force' during his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. The Reverend Martin Luther King used it in the United States to oppose segregation and during the campaigns he led at the time of the civil rights movement in the United States. While acknowledging Gandhi's influence over his work Martin Luther King acknowledged, "Like most people, I had heard of Gandhi, but I had never studied him seriously. As I read I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of non-violent resistance. I was particularly moved by his Salt March to the Sea and his numerous fasts. The whole concept of Satyagraha was profoundly significant to me. As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi, my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potency in the area of social reform. It was because of Gandhi's emphasis on love and non-violence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking."<sup>36</sup> Later, Nelson Mandela used the Satyagraha technique in South Africa to end apartheid.

---

## 6.12 CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

---

At present, the negative effects of globalization have created an unbridgeable gap between rich and poor countries and between people as well. Powerful nations try to garner all the world's resources for their own benefit and are ready to use military force to impose their will on others. Moreover, militancy, insurgency and terrorism have become the order of the day in several parts of the world. Minority Politics of language, culture, ethnicity, religion and region and consequent crises situation has taken a heavy toll on global peace and security. Real or perceived grievances-political, economic and socio-cultural-have led to catastrophic conditions everywhere. On failure of peaceful, constitutional means in achieving the goal, the leadership has taken recourse to violence and use of force. There are incidents leading to huge loss of life and property by terrorist activities and also by counter-terrorist actions of the state. Unfortunately, innocent civilians are becoming targets of both terrorists and state agencies. Terrorists terrorize to discredit the State in the eyes of its own subjects and State terrorizes to eliminate opposition to its authority and to suppress political dissensions. While terrorists try to justify their action in the name of right to self-determination or achievement of political goals or due to socio-economic injustice, the State justifies it in the name of protecting their citizens and safeguarding their territorial integrity. There is rather a race between the parties to terrorize and who terrorizes more comprehensively and effectively wins the race. This is the sorry spectacle of international politics of the day. In such a situation, all right thinking human beings have to resolve that violence is unacceptable and unjustifiable and serves no purpose.

Here comes Gandhi's technique of 'Satyagraha' and his vision of a non-violent mass movement. All his arguments against the use of violence on the part of anarchists against the British colonial rule are more relevant today than they were ever before. That violence leads to more violence needs no further proof. His advocacy of the use of soul-force or love-force and his strategy of Satyagraha to attain unsullied 'Swaraj' stands vindicated. Uninterrupted peace and everlasting prosperity could be achieved, if only attention is paid to Gandhi's prescription to the issues of globalization and international terrorism.

---

## 6.13 SUMMARY

---

To achieve the goal of national independence from colonial rule, Gandhi emphasized 'ahimsa' and 'satya', which he welded together in the concept and practice of 'Satyagraha'. Satyagraha proved to be a novel method of political action, a technique which revolutionized Indian politics and galvanized millions to act against the British Raj. Satyagraha for Gandhi was the only legitimate way to earn one's political rights, as it was based on the ideals of truth and non-violence. Satyagraha was the key aspect of all revolutions of the Indian National Movement in the Gandhian era. It is the most potent legacy Gandhi left to India and to the world. Satyagraha is the pursuit of truth. Gandhi believed that truth should be the cornerstone of everybody's life and that one must dedicate our lives to pursuing truth, to finding out the truth in our lives. So his entire philosophy was the philosophy of life. It was not just a philosophy for conflict resolution, but something that we have to imbibe in our lives and live it all the time so that we can improve and become better human beings.

---

## 6.14 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

---

- 1) Describe the concept of 'Satyagraha' and bring out its political, socio-economic and spiritual dimensions.
- 2) Evaluate the role of Gandhi in transforming the Concept of Satyagraha as a political weapon against the European Colonial masters.
- 3) Write in detail about Gandhi's Satyagraha movement in British India.
- 4) Explain in brief the legacy of Satyagraha outside India.
- 5) What is the contemporary relevance of Satyagraha? Explain.

---

## 6.15 SUGGESTED READINGS

---

'All You Need Is Love'. *The Daily Howler*. September 3, 2010. <http://www.dailyhowler.com/dh090310.shtml>.

'Role of Satyagraha in the Freedom Movements in the French and Portuguese India'. *Journal of Gandhian Studies*. Vol. V, Nos. I & II, 2007. pp.55-70.

Brecher, Michael. *Nehru-A Political Biography*. Oxford University Press. Delhi. 1998.

Chandra, Bipin. et al., *Freedom Struggle*. National Book Trust. New Delhi, 2000.

Gandhi, M.K. *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*. Navjivan Publishing House. Ahmedabad. 2008. p. 84.

Gandhi, M.K. *India Of My Dreams*. Navjivan Publishing House. Ahmedabad. 2001. p. 87.

Gandhi, M.K. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Read Books. Vancouver. 2007.

Gandhi, M.K. *Satyagraha in South Africa*. Translated from the Gujarati by Valji Govindji Desai. Navajivan Publishing House. Ahmadabad. 1928.

Gandhi, Rajmohan. *Patel: A Life*. Navajivan Publishing House. Ahmedabad. 1990.

Krishnamurthy, B. 'Hind Swaraj: Gandhian Prescription to the Right to Self-Determination'. *Journal of Gandhian Studies*. Special number on Hind Swaraj. Vol. VII, No.1, 2009. pp. 69-81.

Lohia, Ram Manohar. *Action in Goa*. August Publication House. Bombay. 1947.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. *India's Foreign Policy Selected Speeches: September 1946 – April 1961*. The Publication Division. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Government of India. Second Reprint. New Delhi. 1983.

Parekh, Bhikhu. 'Gandhi in the 21st Century'. *Transcend Media Service*. December 11, 2009. <https://www.transcend.org/tms/2009/12/gandhi-in-the-21st-century/>.

Prabhu, R.K. and U. R. Rao. (Eds). *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*. Green Leaf Books. Ahmedabad. 1967.

Sheik Ali, B. (ed.). *Goa Wins Freedom Reflections and Reminiscences*. Goa University. Goa, 1987.

---

## UNIT 7 TRUSTEESHIP

---

### Structure

- 7.1 Introduction
  - Aims and Objectives*
- 7.2 Concept of Trusteeship
  - 7.2.1 Trusteeship Formula
- 7.3 Trusteeship-An Ancient Indian Concept
- 7.4 Kinds of Property
  - 7.4.1 Gifts of Nature
  - 7.4.2 Product of Social Living
- 7.5 State Regulated Trusteeship
- 7.6 Summary
- 7.7 Terminal Questions
- 7.8 Suggested Readings

---

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

---

For Gandhi political freedom from the British rule was not the only important issue for India in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. His travels throughout the country ad exposed him to the poverty and misery of the downtrodden masses. Economic development for India was of vital importance to him. The inequalities present in the Indian society did not escape Gandhi's notice. He believed that unless the landowners, the rich did not take into account the ferment brewing in the peasant and labour class, there would be an entire overthrow of the politico-economic system. The ownership of property and resources has always been a thorny issue between those who favoured capitalism and the communist economists. The former believes that right to property is absolute and needs no intervention by the state. They believe that each man is the best judge of his own interest and would make efforts to better his own lot and also promote general good. The Communists rejected the Capitalist model on the ground that it inevitably led to the growth of monopolies and imperialism on one hand, and the constant exploitation of the working class on the other.

Gandhi rejected both these solutions. He believed them to be based on violence, exploitation and tyranny. He firmly believed that instead of changing the property relations, if the uses to which property is put changes, one can have the desired results. He advocated trusteeship as a relevant choice between the existing but unacceptable system of Capitalist organization and its 'inevitable' throw by violence. He believed that as far as the present owners of wealth are concerned they have to make a choice between war and voluntarily converting themselves into the trustees of their wealth. The choice is not between the two parties, that is wealth-owners and their workers, but for the society as a whole. He seeks to harmonize the economic relations and to conciliate the ultimate values into a state of equilibrium through Trusteeship.

---

\* Suruchi Aggarwal, H-6A Panchsheel ViharNr. D.D.A. Flats, Khirki Extn., New Delhi

## *Aims and Objectives*

After studying this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- Gandhi's doctrine of Trusteeship.
- Trusteeship as an ancient Indian concept.
- Kinds of property under the Trusteeship system.
- State regulated trusteeship.
- Contemporary relevance of Trusteeship.

---

## **7.2 CONCEPT OF TRUSTEESHIP**

---

Gandhi's economic ideas were part of his general struggle against poverty, exploitation against socio-economic injustice, and deteriorating moral standards. Gandhi was an economist of the masses. His approach was rooted in human dignity. His economic philosophy is a result of a number of experiments which he conducted in the course of his life. His pragmatic approach gave a new direction to the existing socio-economic problems in the process of protecting human dignity.

According to Gandhi the landowner, rich men have to act as trustees of what they own, i.e. they have dedicated the rights to their property and material goods to the common people. In spite of their wealth they have to bring themselves down to the level of the common labour and earn their bread (livelihood) by labour (hard work). For the workers he advocated that they should act as trustees for their labour which means that they should believe that their productive efforts are for the welfare of the society.

In the present system, workers sell their labour and the rich buy it from the market. Thus the rich hardly engage themselves in any kind of physical labour, whereas the workers have to constantly engage themselves in physical labour. The ideal situation would be one in which the workers have their leisure time and the owners of the means of production also engage themselves in some kind of physical labour. Then alone the dignity of labour would be established in the society. The workers should have shares both in the process of production as well as distribution. Even some of the State laws give such rights to the workers.

### **7.2.1 Trusteeship formula**

- i) Trusteeship provides a way of changing the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It does not give importance to capitalism, but gives the present owner class a chance to reform itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
- ii) It does not recognise any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.
- iii) It does not exclude legislation of the ownership and use of wealth.
- iv) Thus under state regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction while disregarding the interests of the society.

- v) Just as it is proposed to give a decent minimum living wage, a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that would be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so that the tenancy would be towards the obliteration of the difference.
- vi) Under Gandhi's economic order, the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal greed.

---

### 7.3 TRUSTEESHIP-AN ANCIENT INDIAN CONCEPT

---

He based his doctrine of trusteeship on the first sloka of Isopanisad, according to which one is asked to dedicate everything to God and then use it only to the required extent. The principal condition laid down in it is that one must not covet what belongs to others. In other words, in the first instance, everything must be surrendered to God and then out of it one may use only that which is necessary for the service of God's creation, according to one's strict needs. This makes it clear beyond doubt that it is not in industrial and business sectors only that the doctrine of trusteeship is to be made applicable. The spirit of this doctrine is detachment and service. Unless these two virtues are inculcated, it is impossible to obey the command "covet not anybody's riches". Therefore Gandhi's idea of trusteeship arose from his faith in the law of non-possession. It was founded on his religious belief that everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore the bounties of the world were for His people, as a whole, not for any particular individual. When an individual had more than his respective portion, he became a trustee of that portion for God's people. God who is all-powerful has no need to store.

Trusteeship, to Gandhi, was neither an economic expedient nor a make shift for him. It was a way of life. He said: "My theory of trusteeship is no make shift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it."<sup>37</sup> The Indian philosophy, religion and morals are replete with this. The ancient Indian concept of rulers or kings was that of a real trustee. The philosophy contained in the concept of 'Ramarajya' bears testimony to the fact that under the Indian cultural heritage, the rulers wielded power not for their own sake but for the sake of their subjects. Bharat reigned over Ayodhya during Ramachandra's absence as the latter's trustee. Lord Krishna acted as the charioteer of Arjuna in the battle of Mahabharata, not with any ulterior motive or expectation of any gains from the battle. He acted as a trustee of Arjuna to give satisfaction to the latter.

In the past, the heads of Hindu joint families used to live the life of true trustees. According to K.M. Munshi, "He held the family property and was expected to manage and administer it for the welfare of the family He was expected to watch with care the advancement of its younger members belonging even to collateral branches and had to give asylum to the orphans, widows, destitutes in the family."<sup>38</sup> Writing specifically about the property, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has pointed out, "Property according to the Hindu View, is a mandate held by its possessors for the common use and benefit of the commonwealth. The Bhagavata tells us that we have a claim only to so much as would satisfy our hunger. If anyone desires more, he is thief deserving punishment."<sup>39</sup>

Thus the concept of trusteeship should be viewed in the context of the values it stood for. Though the doctrine is as old as the age, Gandhi tried to apply this philosophical teaching to the concrete realities of life for the solution of the existing economic problems. The ‘Bhagwad Gita’ had had a profound effect on Gandhi’s thinking and spiritual philosophy. According to him the principle of renunciation of property while retaining the property in the form of a trust for the common good of many was a thought applicable to the society perpetually.

---

## 7.4 KINDS OF PROPERTY

---

### 7.4.1 Gifts of Nature

Gandhi believed that everything on Earth belonged to God and was from God. According to him an individual who owns property as a legacy or due to his/her hard work and enterprise, should use the excess for the greater good of mankind. He said that everyone must realize that need and greed are two different things. Anything more than a person’s need which belonged to him/her is for the community and must be used for its welfare.

### 7.4.2 Product of Social Living

A person cannot accumulate wealth in a social vacuum. Suppose a person has accumulated huge wealth and established several industries, he alone cannot run or manage that. There might have been many persons who helped that person in accumulating that wealth. Gandhi emphasized that the ownership of the labourers and the peasants is something more than mere moral ownership. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the help of the poor in the society. Since they have helped the capitalist in accumulating the wealth, they have their share in that also. Each is entitled to acquire only that much of wealth or property that is essential for his immediate need or his existence. None has a right to acquire more than what is needed to satisfy his absolute and immediate needs, particularly when millions are unable to satisfy their most basic requirements. He wrote, “You and I have no right to anything that we really have until these ... millions are clothed and fed better.”<sup>40</sup>

He allowed the people with talent to earn more but asked them to utilize their talent for the good of the suffering people. They would have their earnings only as trustees i.e., owners in their own rights but owners in the right of those whom they have exploited. An industrious person with more than average intelligence may acquire by legitimate means, more property than idle men and men of average or below average intelligence even without resorting to violence and exploitation. He admitted, “It is my conviction that it is possible to acquire riches without consciously doing wrong. For example, I may light on a gold mine in my one acre of land.”<sup>41</sup> This he wrote in the form of a reply to Shankar Rao Deo, who had raised an issue, whether crores can be earned by legitimate means, ‘Surely a man may conceivably make crores through strictly pure means assuming that a man may legitimately possess riches.... If I own a mining lease and I tumble upon a diamond of rare value I may suddenly find myself a millionaire without being held guilty of having used impure means.’<sup>42</sup> Although such wealth may be legitimately acquired without violence and exploitation, he was not prepared to accept it as a source of one’s real happiness and his balanced growth. Rather they stood as stumbling blocks on the way of self realisation and blossoming of

an integrated personality and all-round development of the individual. Gandhi suggested cultivation of a spirit of detachment from wealth and utilizing only a portion of it for oneself that is needed for meeting one's 'legitimate needs' and 'honourable livelihood'.

He accepted trusteeship as a practical proposition which shall liberate the wealthy and the possessing class of their sin of acquisitiveness and greed and effect a change over in favour of egalitarian society. Elaborating the Upanishadic mantra 'Tena Twaktena Bhunjitha' he said, "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours, it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs and use the remainder for Society."<sup>43</sup>

Gandhi knew that both physical and intellectual ability differs from man to man. Some are capable of working with greater vigour and energy than others and their labour sincerely performed and honestly executed, may prove more productive of material wealth than that of others, who are less energetic and enterprising. Besides, people with better intellectual ability and vigour may devise ways and means for greater material prosperity and intellectual excellence of the nation. The material prosperity and progress of the nation depend upon enthusiastic performance of such capable, energetic, enterprising and imaginative individuals and not on the half-hearted work of the idler, sickly, and the mentally deficient citizens. Gandhi preferred that such individuals with more than average, or unusual ability shall work as per their capacity but shall only get what is required for fulfilling their legitimate needs in return.

Trusteeship according to Gandhi was a noble goal to aspire for. A goal if realized by each individual would bring about a more equal and noble society. There is a finer, subtler, and a more vital chord, according to Gandhi, in every human heart, that is noble, self sacrificing and full of compassion for others. Sometimes the dust of greed, selfishness and egoism may accumulate on this chord, but properly handled, this subtle chord in the human heart shall transmit the melodious music of sacrifice, self sufferings and renunciation for the benefit of the others. "There are chords in every human heart. If we only know how to strike the right chord we bring out the music."<sup>44</sup> He also said, "We must appeal to the good in human-beings and expect response."<sup>45</sup>

---

## 7.5 STATE REGULATED TRUSTEESHIP

---

Gandhi realized the limitations of the concept of voluntary assumption of trusteeship by the rich. He also realized the need for the adoption of the strategy of pressure that had to be exercised by the labourers. Thus, the significance of statutory measures or legislation for giving effect to his idea of trusteeship came about. But the statute that Gandhi had in his mind was not to be imposed from above by the all-pervading state that represented violence in its concentrated and organized form. It shall not be planned out and implemented by the elites of the ruling party or the bureaucracy. He wanted such statutes not to be imposed from above but should come from below. Gandhi's ideal picture of social and political organization comprehended a system of self sufficient and self governing village republics, democratically organized Gram Panchayats as the basic unit of the government formed on the basis of consent of the people. The legislation regulating the wealth of the propertied class shall therefore emanate from such Gram Panchayats after a free and full discussion and proper understanding of



the principles by people in general. He believed that when the people understand the implications of trusteeship they themselves through the Gram Panchayats introduce such statutes. Such statutes which originate from the grass-root levels are easy to follow as compared to those statutes which come from the state above.

Gandhi favoured the statutes or legislations as techniques of last resort to give effect to the idea of Trusteeship. He did not overlook the power of the technique of persuasion and conversion to aid and implement the statutory enactments effectively. He felt that persuasion and conversion should precede statutory enactments so that it will make the propertied classes mentally prepared to accept the statutory enactments intended to give effect to trusteeship system. But, the technique of conversion that he suggests is not by way of prayer and petitions, but by exhibition of potency of democratic forces or public opinion. He said, "If the owning class does not accept the trusteeship basis voluntarily its conversion must come under the pressure of public opinion."<sup>46</sup>

Gandhi also felt that the state could be depended upon for the introduction of trusteeship. Educating the people in the principles of trusteeship to provide a basis to the statutory trusteeship system, or educating the workers and peasants to be conscious of their rights and dignity so that necessary social conditions conducive to trusteeship are created, is a time consuming process. But unless the state intervenes in time, some national assets may be spoiled by unimaginative and useless owners of that property. Although Gandhi was afraid of the power of the state and the violence perpetuated by it, for the sake of the long term interest of the nation, he was prepared to allow state intervention to force trusteeship upon the possessing and the privileged class. "I would be happy indeed if the people concerned behaved as trustees, but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the state."<sup>47</sup>

When Gandhi wanted to secure the original trustees' choice subjecting it to 'legal sanction', he acted as a pragmatist who felt that the trustees, however above the average men and however, self sacrificing they themselves may be, may have some weakness for their own children. If the trustees are given unrestrained power to choose their successor they may choose their own people to succeed them as trustees. This may be particularly true in case of statutory trustees who have not voluntarily renounced their possessions or possessiveness, but have been forced to act as such under the pressure of the statute enacted either by the village Panchayat or the state. Gandhi suggested that the nomination made by the original trustees needed to be confirmed by the state.

---

## 7.6 SUMMARY

---

Gandhi in his concept of Trusteeship believes in the goodness of heart and humanitarian nature of other fellowmen too. His concept of Trusteeship has been thus criticized for being naïve and not propagating equality in society. Many critics and even his protégé Jawaharlal Nehru believed that the concept of Trusteeship carried forward a feudal society and promoted capitalism.

According to Professor M.L. Dantwala, "The division of the society into the property owning and the property less classes, which is the characteristic of capitalism, is sought to be retained in Gandhism also. The only difference in Gandhism is that the erstwhile capitalist, property owning classes will consider

itself trustee on behalf of the proletariat. The change is purely on the subjective sphere. The objective conditions of production will continue by remaining as they were in capitalism. Production will continue by unplanned private competition among the individual trustees. These conditions of production have a compelling logic of their own which will lead to the same contradictions as are witnessed under capitalism today.”<sup>48</sup>

E.M.S. Namboodiripad said, “Not only in relation to the rural poor, but also in relation to the working class and other sections of the working people, his was an approach which, in actual practice, helped the bourgeoisie. His theory of trusteeship, his insistence on certain moral values as the guiding line for any political activity, the skillful way in which he combined his own extra parliamentary activities (constructive programme and Satyagraha) with the parliamentary activities of his lieutenants, the characteristically Gandhian way of combining negotiations with the enemy even while carrying on mass direct action against him all these proved in actual practice to be of enormous help to the bourgeoisie in (a) rousing the masses in action against imperialism and in (b) preventing them from resorting to revolutionary mass action. This ability of his to rouse the masses and yet to check them, to launch anti imperialist direct action and yet to go on negotiating with the imperialist rulers made him the undisputed leader of the bourgeoisie.”<sup>49</sup>

According to Professor J.J. Anjaria, a sympathetic Gandhian economist, “Trusteeship as a short term measure was excellent, but in the long-term coercion is ethically bad; on any large scale, it is also not expedient. But the run away from the problem by merely appealing to the more fortunate ones to show a little more charity awful word is no solution.”<sup>50</sup>

Nobel Laureate, Gunnar Myrdal, who calls Gandhi ‘a radical liberal’, maintains in his ‘Asian Drama’ that “the trusteeship idea is fundamentally a concept that fits into paternalistic, feudal, pre democratic society. It is so flexible that it can serve as a justification for inequality. Possibly Gandhi realized this, for he demanded a moral revolution, a change of heart among the rich. But in the real world, such a revolution is unlikely and the trusteeship ideal is nought but a vision of society where the rich are charitable so that the poor can remain weak ... by his stress on the principle of trusteeship, and his friendliness towards many in exalted economic positions, he established a pattern of radicalism in talk but conservatism in action that is still very much a part of the Indian scene.”<sup>51</sup>

The main thrust of trusteeship is very broad and deep and is thus not easy to comprehend. There is no historical example of it to go by. Besides full trusteeship cases have not been experimented anywhere. This doctrine of Gandhi has been either bitterly criticized or highly praised but not experimented.

---

## 7.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

---

- 1) Explain Gandhi's concept of Trusteeship.
- 2) What is the Trusteeship formula?
- 3) Elaborate upon Trusteeship as an ancient Indian concept.
- 4) What is state regulated trusteeship?
- 5) Is the concept of Trusteeship relevant in today's times?

---

## 7.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

---

- Anjaria, J. J. *An Essay on Gandhian Economics*. Vora & Co. Bombay. 1945.
- Biswas, S. C. (Ed.). *Gandhi, Theory and Practice, Social Impact and Contemporary Relevance*. Indian Institute of Advanced Studies. Shimla. 1969.
- Dantwala, M. L. *Gandhism Reconsidered*. Padma Publications. Bombay. 1945.
- Dharmadhikari, C.S. 'Gandhian View on Trusteeship'. Gandhi Sevagram Ashram. n.d. <https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/gandhi-articles/gandhi-concept-of-trusteeship.php>.
- Gandhi, M.K. 'Gandhi's Concept of Trusteeship'. Institute of Gandhian Studies. n.d. <http://www.gvpwardha.iecit.in/documents/books/contemplatinggandhi/Ch-12.pdf>.
- Harijan: A Journal of Applied Gandhism*. Garland Publishing Inc. New York. 1973.
- Kesavulu, Y. 'Gandhian Trusteeship as an Instrument of Human Dignity'. Mahatma Gandhi's Writings and Philosophies. Vol. 25, No 4. January-March, 2004. <https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/trusteeship.htm>.
- McDermott, Robert A. (Ed.). *The Basic Writings of S.Radhakrishnan*. Jaico Publishing House. Mumbai. 1972.
- Moniz, John. *Liberated Society: Gandhian and Christian Vision: Comparative Study*. Gregorian University Press. Rome. 1996.
- Mukherjee, Hiren. *Gandhi: A Study*. People Publishing House. New Delhi. 1960.
- Myrdal, Gunnar. *Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*. Panteon. New York. 1968.
- Namboodiripad, E.M.S. *The Mahatma and the Ism*. People Publishing House. New Delhi. 1959.
- Nehru, Jawaharlal. *An Autobiography*. The Bodley Head. London. 1958.
- Sethi, J. D. *Gandhi Today*. Vikas Publishing House. New Delhi. 1976.
- Sharma, Jai Narain and B.R. Dugar. *Relative Economics*. Deep and Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi. 2010.
- Sharma, Jai Narain. *Alternative Economics*. Deep and Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi 2003.
- Shukla, V. 'Relevance of Gandhian Economics in the era of Globalization and its educational implications'. 2015. [ir.inflibnet.ac.in](http://ir.inflibnet.ac.in).
- Smith, Adam. *An Inquiry into Nature and Causes of Wealth of Nation*. The Modern Library. New York. 1938.
- The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. Publications Division. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Government of India. New Delhi. 1961.
- Young India*. Navajivan Publishing House. Ahmedabad. n.d.

