

The Role of Enlightened Anarchy in Mahatma Gandhi's Future Plan for India

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ABSTRACT

Mahatma K. Gandhi was one of the political and spiritual pioneers of the 20th century. His utopian impulses weakened his appeal's universality and clouded the core principles of the Indian people. In that they support a traditional, morally upright, and apolitical India, Gandhi's ideas are anarchist. Hind Swaraj, which was published in 1909 and offers a methodical explanation of Gandhi's thoughts on the state, society, and country, is the closest Gandhi came to publishing a work of political philosophy. He advocated anarchy as one of numerous conditions for real swaraj, or self-rule, rather than as an end in and of itself. With the help of satyagraha, Indians might more easily adopt the spiritually enlightened lifestyles of their ancestors (non-violent spiritual opposition). Gandhi's future ideas were somewhat vague; therefore some academics have been hesitant to accept this interpretation of him. Gandhi was "delightfully ambiguous" regarding the precise type of governance that should be pursued, according to Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister and renowned figure. Nevertheless, I contend in this article that there is enough data to compile Gandhi's predictions for the future. The Hind Swaraj, which was published in 1909 and has been referred to as "the closest he got to construct a sustained book of political philosophy," contains the fullest embodiment of his beliefs.

Keywords: Hind Swaraj, Satyagrah, Capitalizm, Khadi.

I INTRODUCTION

Most people would agree that Mahatma K. Gandhi was one of the 20th century's most politically and spiritually revolutionary individuals. Gandhi is rightfully credited with creating Satyagraha, engaging in extensive civil disobedience to fight injustice, and espousing a transcendent message that helped the Indian National Congress win its independence from the British in August 1947, among many other notable accomplishments. However, conventional historians frequently ignore or omit Gandhi's idealistic tendencies, which in reality undermined the universality of his appeal and confused the ideological foundations of the Indian nation. His predictions for India's future were considerably out of the ordinary. Gandhi's idealised world had no representative government, constitution, army, police, industrialization, machinery, and most definitely no modern cities. There wouldn't be capitalism, communism, exploitation, or violence caused by religion. A future India would instead take its cues from the past. An agricultural economy, self-sufficient villages, civil law, and a moral code that reflected the consensus of the populace as a whole would not exist. Gandhi's writings, which support a premodern, morally upright, and apolitical India, in many ways uphold antiquated ideals. Some of Gandhi's writings from the night before the Transfer of Power suggest that his specific opinions on the subject changed significantly over time, but they still show enough consistency to sustain this characterization.

Some scholars have been cautious to adopt this view of Gandhi because of his oftentimes vague future thoughts. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister and a well-known individual, described Gandhi as being "delightfully ambiguous" regarding the specific sort of administration that should be followed. However, I argue in this post that there is sufficient information to assemble

Gandhi's prognoses for the future. The finest explanation of his views can be found in The Hind Swaraj, which was published in 1909 and has been described to as "the closest he went to producing a continuous work of political philosophy." Even if it occasionally contradicts itself, Hind Swaraj expresses Gandhi's views on the nation, society, and the state in a logical manner. This important work, together with Gandhi's autobiography, speeches, interviews, pamphlets, and publications, offers a thorough understanding of Gandhi's political objectives. These publications make up the Collected Works, a vast mass of information that takes up almost 90 hefty volumes. Given this richness of knowledge, Gandhi's future objectives may be briefly stated. This essay carefully examines the Hind Swaraj and, to a lesser extent, the Collected Works for the expression of Gandhi's economic conceptions, political notions, and social ideas in order to support the claim that Gandhi yearned for individualist anarchy—a social system hostile to state control and dismissive of private property. Gandhi favoured anarchy, but not as a goal in and of itself, but as one of several essential prerequisites for authentic self-rule, or swaraj. India's top aim was to attain swaraj before pursuing socioeconomic or political revolution. This required both self-rule over one's mind and passions as well as self-rule over the government. By reducing selfishness, violence, and intergroup conflict, swaraj would make it easier for people to have more prosperity, compassion, and personal fulfilment. In his book Hind Swaraj, Gandhi contends that even once the British are gone, India won't achieve true "self-rule" until it experiences a spiritual upheaval. Anarchy is the optimum environment for this change to occur and last before any future Indian state can be established. Gandhi thought that since a happy life could be had without the trappings of civil government, they were useless. The end of government would be the result of spiritual renewal. With

the help of satyagraha, Indians might more easily adopt the spiritually enlightened lifestyles of their ancestors (non-violent spiritual opposition).

Government was less of a help and more of a hindrance to living a decent life. Government ipso facto assured a future unsuited for Gandhi's enlightened India of the past because of its linkages to modern culture. Western governments were morally repugnant and chauvinistic in their culture. In Hind Swaraj, Gandhi makes the case that we, rather than the British, are to blame for India's troubles because we "have succumbed to modern civilization." Government was a barrier to living morally, not a way to get there. Because of its ties to contemporary culture, government ipso facto ensured a future unfit for Gandhi's enlightened India of the past. Western regimes were chauvinistic in culture and morally abhorrent. Gandhi argues in Hind Swaraj that since we "have succumbed to modern civilisation," we are to responsible for India's problems rather than the British. Therefore, it was against the law for Indians to manage their desires and objectives, achieve dignity in the workplace, and establish a trusteeship of wealth. This was brought on by modern civilization and its insistence on having a powerful national authority. In 1929, Gandhi emphasised this strongly by declaring, "The Western civilization that passes for civilization is repugnant to me." In today's culture, materialism, erroneous ideas of wealth and merit, and competitiveness were all encouraged. In contrast, Gandhi said that satyagraha would result in a life of simplicity in which people worked to fulfil their fundamental needs rather than for showy consumption. The only way India could begin a new life as an independent nation was by utilising the moral resources found within her own traditions. Post-modern, enlightened societies would be the only places where "true" civilization existed.

II THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF GANDHI'S DREAM STATE

Gandhi's idea of a brand-new India included a fresh take on economics that rejected both capitalism and socialism due to their associations with industrialization and its excesses of exploitation. Gandhi firmly disagreed with laissez-faire and Keynesian economics, as well as the idea of a capitalist society rich with opportunity for exploitation and unending rivalry. Gandhi said that India should stop depending on a global economy that allows for the unrestricted movement of goods and wealth. Neither was socialism any more tolerable. In a 1940 interview, Gandhi stated that he was opposed to socialism, stating that "Pandit Nehru favours industrialization because he thinks that if it is socialised, it will be free from the crimes of capitalism." I believe socialisation cannot solve the inherent flaws of

industrialism. Man was made a prisoner of his craving for luxury and self-indulgence by capitalism and socialism, the two cornerstones of modern civilization. Gandhi's I.N.C. coworkers, particularly Nehru, were baffled by his thoughts on the matter. In his memoirs, Nehru called Gandhi's economic views "utterly erroneous... and unachievable." Despite this uninspiring support, Gandhi persevered in broadly promoting his unusual social, economic, and political ideals. Gandhi's statements and writings suggest that, after rejecting capitalism and socialism, he envisioned an Indian state built on unorthodox economics that encouraged independence. Gandhi seems to have pictured a free nation that valued toil and cooperation among its people. Gandhi makes the following claim in his Collected Works that society should be organised to maximise the production of khadi (handspun cotton): "Khadi is the only real economic solution for the millions of villagers, if ever, until a better way of offering work and sufficient compensation for every able-bodied person over the age of sixteen, male or female, is established for his farm, cottage, or even factory in every village in India." Gandhi advocated for public ownership as opposed to private property ownership, arguing that owners would act as trustees to maintain public property for the benefit of everyone. As a result, each participant in the khadi economic system would get "payment" in kind. For example, a blacksmith would receive food as payment for creating tools, while farmers would receive equipment as payment for sowing seeds, and so on. Such a pre-modern trade would be quite beneficial. I have no desire to go back to the easy procedures of grinding and husking, Gandhi said. However, he really spoke in favour of leaving, claiming that there was "no other option to offer employment to the millions of peasants who are languishing in idleness." Gandhi emphasised physical labour and khadi spinning as the greatest methods to achieve real self-rule while preserving tradition. Modernization, industrialization, and exploitation might be stopped by implementing an organic economy based on khadi. It would result in genuine swaraj by removing the moral constraints preventing spiritual rebirth. Machines are a good example of how Gandhi's ideals have changed. Due to the allure of ever-increasing output and efficiency, machinery has adverse impacts that have impeded man's natural progress. Gandhi believed that because machinery so much whetted the desires of its users, it inevitably resulted in exploitation, unemployment, and famine.

Instead of improving industrialisation, he proposed ending the practise altogether. Gandhi claims:

"Machines should be viewed as a curse rather than a benefit... If we focused on such things, our predecessors knew we would end up as slaves and lose our moral sense. It's not that we lacked the knowledge to build machines. They came to the conclusion that we should

only use our hands and feet to do important chores after giving it some thought.”

According to this allusion from Hind Swaraj, Gandhi predicted that his native nation will maintain a pre-modern trajectory characterised by its emphasis on tradition. Indians should carry on the honest, hard work of their ancestors, who wisely shunned modernism in favour of a different form of progress.

III THE POLITICS OF THE INDIAN STATE OF GANDHI

Gandhi's scepticism of modern politics is reflected in his critique of the modern economy, which includes capitalism, socialism, and industrialization. Gandhi was very vocal in his criticism of contemporary political systems. He spoke primarily against Western democracies and the negative consequences of that system. Gandhi, for instance, refers to the British parliament as a "prostitute" and a "sterile woman" in Hind Swaraj because it has "done not a single positive thing" and is "under the authority of a minister who changes from time to time." Gandhi had strong feelings about Westminster's flaws: "If India replicates England, I am convinced that she would be destroyed. They are in worse shape than animals. Similar criticisms of communism were made by Gandhi. Although he approved of some features of Marxism in principle, he hated the way it was imposed and how it spread atheism. I am revolted by it insofar as it is based on violence and the denial of God, he declared. It had a tendency to concentrate power in the hands of a small number of people, which made it defective in practise (i.e. the U.S.S.R.). A hierarchical power structure like that was against Gandhi's concept of the state. Gandhi thought that this power concentration was so harmful because it destroyed man's individuality, which he saw as the basis for moral advancement. Gandhi therefore sought to distinguish India from both communism and democracy. He seems to have backed a political alternative that favoured a total absence of governmental structures and authorities. He claimed that constitutionalism will be rendered obsolete as the country moved toward enlightened anarchy. He voiced hope for "an educated anarchy in which each person will become his own tyrant. He will behave in a way that doesn't endanger the wellbeing of his neighbours. There are many similarities between this concept of enlightened anarchy and Gandhi's humble worldview. Gandhi didn't believe that he alone had the moral character traits required to govern a nation in politics. Gandhi states in his book his steadfast dislike for career politicians and disavows having any political ambitions. Praise "stings me," he said, while the phrase Mahatma (Great Soul) "really hurts me." Gandhi, despite his great popularity and international reputation, had no intention of entering the political race personally. The

reasons behind those who did seek power worried him far more. Gandhi said that in order to allay this concern, a pre-modern state made up of apolitical, self-sufficient villages would reduce the chance of political exploitation and increase the likelihood of unconstrained individual liberty. The empowerment of peasants would serve as the foundation of Gandhi's pre-modern state. Decentralization would benefit Indian tribes in many ways by getting rid of the oppressive federalist system of government. By enabling communities to become economically self-sufficient, it would facilitate the growth of khadi. No less crucial would be its impact on the mental well-being of India's peasants, who would become more self-assured in their ability to rule themselves and manage their own affairs. Society would be made up of the "innumerable... ever-widening, never-ascending" village republics. Gandhi developed this village-centric perspective in a 1944 paper as follows:

“Independence must begin at the ground level. Every community will become a republic with all the privileges as a consequence. Every town must thus be capable of supporting itself and managing its affairs, even to the extent of defending itself from the outside world. It will be prepared to die and trained to defend itself from any outside attack.” Gandhi undoubtedly wanted to change the way Indian society functioned. In order to do this, it would be necessary to abolish not just national borders and armies, but also commerce, democracy, and political control. Gandhi even goes so far as to suggest that the sole activity permitted in India should be the exchange of khadi yarn for cash. Given his desire to dismantle modern state institutions like national armies and replace money, Gandhi can legitimately be referred to as an anarchist. Gandhi sought to have as little government as possible in India, but he did not specify how or to what extent this would lead to the establishment of a new society. In fact, modern academics are unsure of how Gandhi would have gone about establishing his beliefs if given the chance (he did not, on account of being assassinated in January 1948). Gandhi wanted a moral paradigm to embody the will of the people, yet historians dispute on how that paradigm was really put into practise. Gandhi, according to Judith Brown, envisioned a society without positive laws because honest people leading straightforward, cooperative lives would not need outside control and be capable of managing their own issues amicably. According to Rudrangshu Mukherjee, Gandhi envisioned a society "where there was no divide between ruler and ruled, where the former continuously reflected the popular desire." On the other side, Partha Chatterjee believes Gandhi would have institutionalised the state with a fictitious leader. A symbolic monarch would "always convey the common will," according to Chatterjee, "through his moral characteristics and habitual dedication to the truth." If given the chance, it is uncertain how zealously Gandhi would have pursued his utopian ideas. The uncertainty that still exists now can be

partially attributed to Gandhi's progressive change of perspective on the subject over time. His distaste for parliamentary politics was well-known. Gandhi and his associates urged I.N.C. ministers to resign as late as the winter of 1945, barely two years before he passed away, citing the drawbacks of democratic political participation. However, as the Transfer of Power drew nearer, Gandhi got himself into trouble. He spent several years writing about the impending Indian state. Now that independence was in reach, it didn't seem probable that his ambitions would come to fruition. How ought he to respond? Gandhi had to deal with a challenging circumstance because it revealed a fundamental disagreement between his political ideology and the realities of running a state. Gandhi believed that one way to remedy this discrepancy was to give government organisations a very little role in oversight. In the middle of 1946, Gandhi presented a constrained blueprint for how the government would affect society. The only three areas where it may be useful are the organisation of hand-spinning, the safeguarding of cattle wealth, and the production of cotton. A government minister could, at maximum, support the creation of fresh khadi projects. Gandhi avoided the subject when asked for a detailed plan. He acknowledged that as a minister, his main worry is whether the A.I.S.A. had the conviction required to properly manage a khadi firm. Gandhi came up with a plan as independence approached that gave him certain ministerial responsibilities but really demonstrated a lack of or disdain of modern management.

IV CONCLUSION

Gandhi yearned for a future grounded in a rapid return to the past. Although the standard literature sometimes overlooks Gandhi's more unorthodox notions, the evidence exists to substantiate the argument that he had firm ideas about the future of his homeland. At the crux of this ideology was the condemnation of modern civilization, including capitalism, socialism, democracy and communism. He detested the self-indulgent aspects of capitalism, as well as the industrializing tendencies of socialism. Similarly, Gandhi belittled the virtues of democracy, mocking the British parliament and minimizing its supposed representative effectiveness. As an alternative, communism was likened to a mere palliative, doomed for failure: it was violent in its connotations and atheistic in tone. What India needed, suggested Gandhi, was to return to a path of purity, morality, and self-discipline.

In the fall of 1945, Gandhi wrote a letter to Nehru explaining his dreams for the subcontinent. "I believe," began Gandhi, "that sooner or later we shall have to go and live in villages – in huts... Nobody will be allowed to be idle or wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to do body labor." By dispatching of modernity, Gandhi hoped, India would succeed in inaugurating a new era unhinged by the trappings of civil law. Today, six decades after his

death, India stands proudly as the largest democracy in the world with a potent globalized economy. Independence, it would seem, has not paralleled Gandhi's vision, but has followed a "Western" model which Gandhi all his life opposed. True "self-rule" – as defined by Gandhi – remains confined to the pages of the *Hind Swaraj* and the *Collected Works*.

As Judith Brown writes, "He seems to have visualized a loose linkage of independent village republics as the ideal form of the state... he can therefore properly be called an anarchist."

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