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## INDIAN NATIONALISM : GANDHI vis-a-vis TILAK AND SAVARKAR

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*In this paper an attempt has been made to develop Gandhian concept of Indian Nationalism vis-a-vis Lokmanya Tilak and V. D. Savarkar. Gandhi felt it a necessary to respond specifically to the ideology of political terrorism adopted by the expatriate Indian: Shyamji Krishnavarma, V. D. Savarkar, Madanlal Dhingra. Gandhi and Savarkar represented two alternatives and opposed concepts of Nationalism and Hinduism. Savarkar's defensive Hindu Nationalist position justified militancy, violence and terrorism but Gandhi's most important contribution to Indian thought is that self control and self realization should go to the well-being of the nation as a whole. Gandhi developed certain philosophical concepts, based on the cultural practices and values of the small communities, in the interiors of the Indian sub-continent that had been forgotten or underestimated during the English Raj. However, an analytical study of Lokmanya Tilak and Nationalism makes us a proper distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva, since Tilak focused on Hinduism but he was never the supporter of Hindutva. It is also noteworthy that there was no binary opposition between Gandhi and Tilak as compared to Savarkar and Golwalkar, or Jinnah and Maulana Mawadadi. In fact the emergence of democratic, secular, pluralistic, multireligious, multilingual, multiethnic, civic nation of modern India had its roots in Lokmanya Tilak's political ideology because Tilak was a predecessor of Gandhi in the Indian freedom movement and Gandhi developed his movement on the edifice built by Tilak. There is continuation of Tilak's politics during the Gandhian phase in respect of democratization of Indian Politics, anticolonialism, theory of passive resistance, and his interpretation of Gita.*

Modern Indian theory of political resistance was based on the concept of nationalism. But political movements particularly in Asia and Africa were not only nationalistic in the western sense but they were anti-imperialist also. Therefore modern Indian theory of political resistance was developed by the Indian thinkers to educate the Indian people about the evil effects of British rule in India and to instill confidence in their minds that they had capacity to overthrow the British rule. In this paper an attempt has been made to develop Gandhian concept of Indian Nationalism vis-a-vis Lokmanya Tilak and V. D. Savarkar.

Tilak's death coincides with the emergence of Gandhi and his launching of non-co-operation movement. Indian nationalism under Gandhi's leadership took a different approach because of his experiences in South - Africa, he had his own methods, conceptions and ideas to develop Indian nationalism. Mahatma Gandhi had a definite philosophical vision to assess the Indian Praja and the nature of Indian nationalism. Gandhi believed that the ideal of Swaraj can be achieved in modern times only in a 'United Indian Nation' or Praja. Swaraj, and home rule must meet in a newly constituted Indian Praja. That is why Gandhi presents his basic ideas in Hind Swaraj. "Hind Swaraj is the seed from which the tree of Gandhian thought has grown to its full stature".<sup>1</sup> It has been called a very basic document for the study of Gandhi's thought'.<sup>2</sup>

The actual development of Gandhi's concept of nationalism takes an indirect route, for Gandhi entered the world historical stage not in India but in South Africa. A grasp of the **significance** of this fact is absolutely essential for a full understanding of Gandhian nationalism. In the first

place, it was in South Africa, not in India, that he first acquired his vision of Indian Nationalism, a fact which differentiates his nationalism from that of the other Indian nationalism. His idea of nationalism does not start with the locality and then gradually extend itself to the province and finally to the nation. But it was quite the reverse. He was first an Indian, then Gujarati, and only then a Kathiawadi, it is because of his experience in South-Africa. \ Secondly, it is in the politics of the Transvaal, not Champaran or Bardoli, that, he first developed his unique political philosophy and political techniques. As, Antony Copely argues, "indeed it was during his (Gandhi's) return journey in 1909 that he (Gandhi) wrote Hind Swaraj (Indian Home Rule), the key document in Gandhi's discovery of himself as an Indian nationalist. The empire was now seen as offering slavery, not partnership; Gandhi's protest was as much against specific grievances in the Transvaal."<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi in his foreword to Hind Swaraj confesses that; "I have written some chapters on the subject of Indian Home Rule which I venture to place before the readers of India for their opinion. I have written it because I could not restrain myself. I have read much. I have pondered much, during the stay, for four months in London of the Transvaal Indian deputation. I discussed things with as many of my countrymen as I could. I met, besides, as many Englishmen as it was possible for me to meet. I consider it my duty to place before the readers of India for opinion and the conclusions, which appear to me to be final".<sup>4</sup> However Gandhi himself admits that Dadabhai Naoroji is the author of Indian Nationalism.

Gandhi's South African experiences had given him a deep insight into the peculiar problems that Indian Muslims face, in a pluralistic society such as India. He had worked in close harmony with Muslim leaders in South African protest campaigns. On both his London trips he was accompanied by Muslim leaders of the Indian community. Given this background, Gandhi had no reason to think that Indian Muslims would turn away from the general direction that Indian Nationalism was taking. That is why he was sympathetic towards, and supportive of the Minto Morley recommendations, for providing special electoral status for Indian Muslims. His conceptions of nationalism and Swaraj were neutral as far as religion as a sect was concerned. His vision of politics saw Indians, as primarily members of a single nation (Prajā) and only secondarily as members of a sect or a caste or a region.

As a journalist in South Africa, Gandhi was quite well informed of the on goings of the subcontinent. Gandhi was aware of what Tilak and Aurobindo Ghose were writing in their newspapers, the *Kāśari* and the *Maratha*, and the *Bande Mataram*. Tilak's revival of the Ganapati festival, and memory of Shivaji, the hammer of the Moghals, did not help the cause of a composite Indian Nationalism that Gandhi was trying to promote. Neither Aurobindo Ghose's appeal to Shakti (power) in its creative but violent forms, mythologized by Durga, Bhavani and Kali have been more reassuring to Gandhi.

Gandhi felt it a necessary to respond specifically to the ideology of political terrorism adopted by the expatriate Indians. Gandhi recalled in 1921 how on his visit to London in 1909,

he had come into contact with every known Indian anarchist there, and how he had wanted to write a book in answer to the Indian school of violence. A significant number of expatriate Indians were drawn together by their nationalist fervor and by their disenchantment with the Indian National Congress. To Gandhi they appeared to be misguided. Even a superficial glance at Hind Swaraj will be enough to make the reader realise that Gandhi had this group very much in mind when he wrote Hind Swaraj.

A key figure among these expatriates was undoubtedly Shyamji Krishnavarma. He was the founder of Indian House (1905) at Highgate in London, to offer residential facilities for these young men. While Krishnavarma was the organizing genius of the Indian expatriates, V. D. Savarkar was the brain of the group.

Gandhi and Savarkar represented two alternatives and opposed concepts of Nationalism and Hinduism. Gandhi's acquaintance with Savarkar probably started around 1906 when Savarkar went to London on a scholarship from Shyamji Krishnavarma on the recommendation of Lokmanya Tilak. Gandhi and Savarkar meetings were marked by a clash between them. Both used religious cultural metaphors and invoked the hero of the epic Ramayana, (Rama). However for Gandhi, Rama was the embodiment of self suffering and sacrifice, whereas for Savarkar he established righteousness by slaying Ravana. Gandhi and Savarkar discussed political problems, and the problem of Shuddhi. Neither was convinced of the other side. Both of them stood for alternative visions: continuity and change, of Indian identity, Nationalism and Hinduism.

Therefore, it is necessary to concentrate on understanding Savarkar and his Hindutva ideology. Secondly, it is necessary to examine Savarkar's argument which tries to locate Hinduism, Indian Identity and Nationalism. Further it is also necessary to attempt a critique of his argument along Gandhian lines because Savarkar wrote, Hindutva largely as response to the Gandhian ideology.

The central argument used by Savarkar to proceed from Hindutva, Hindu identity and its constitutive factors, to Hindu Nationalism and the Indian identity is primarily historical one: "Every person is a Hindu who regards and owns this Bharat Bhoomi, this land from the Indus to the seas, as his fatherland and Holy land, the land of the origin of his religion and the cradle of his faith".<sup>5</sup>

According to Savarkar Hindutva embraces all traditional modes of thought and practices of the entire Hindu race which includes Vedism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism and all the tribal religions. The Hindu race has two important markers: One, a common allegiance to the mother (father) land which overrides all narrower religious allegiances and two, the fact that all cultural including religious formations that had their origin in this motherland are the common heritage of this race. Hindutva is the acceptance and resolute assertion of these two racial characteristics what is important here is that those who are not Hindus on the above two counts, according to

Savarkar, cannot have a total commitment to Bharat Bhoomi as their religious allegiances would go beyond her frontiers.

Savarkar, argues from here, that by virtue of their commonality, their Hindutva, the Hindus constituted a nation. All tests that go to demonstrate a common country, race, religion, language, entitle the Hindus to form a nation, 'Hindu Rashtra'. Savarkar frequently refers to the injustice that the Hindus as a cultural formation have suffered at the hands of the British and more importantly, the Muslims. The British must be ousted but the large presence of Muslims in India is a divisive force, which can only weaken the just fight against the British. This is what Savarkar has to say about the Muslims: "Muslims in general and the Indian Muslims in particular have not yet grown out of the historical stage, of intense religiosity and the theological concepts of state. Their theological politics divide the human world into two groups only: the Muslim land and the enemy land. All land, which are either inhabited entirely by the Muslims or ruled over by the Muslims are Muslims lands. To any other land no faithful Muslim is allowed to bear any loyalty.... The Muslims remained Muslims first and Muslims last and Indians never."<sup>6</sup>

Thus from the above it has become quite clear that for Savarkar, the Indian nation was or ought to be a Hindu - Rashtra. To answer the charge that such an exclusive concept of nationalism was far too parochial, Savarkar's argument was that all nationalisms and patriotisms were parochial and communal. According to Savarkar Nationalism and Parochialism are inseparable. Therefore Bindu Puri comments that, "Savarkar however insisted that the nationalism, which he so passionately advocated for India was a defensive nationalism: its aim was primarily to defend and ensure the survival of the great Hindu culture and civilization and not to destroy any other comparable and organically united human collective."<sup>7</sup>

Savarkar's defensive Hindu Nationalist position justified militancy, violence and terrorism consequently, his goal of Hindutva is itself sufficient justification for the employment of any means. This ideology provided commitment and zeal to Hindu youth during pre-independence days. Which led to murders, assassinations etc. Moreover The Gita, Ramayana were seen as legitimizing the notion of a war for righteousness or dharma.

Gandhi's most important contribution to Indian thought is that self control and self realization should go to the well-being of the nation as a whole. This is also Gandhi's distinct contribution to political theory. Gandhi emphasized the need to become civic minded as well as peace minded instead of relying only on either brute force or on soul. The complex meaning of Swaraj can only be understood only if we understand what Gandhi means by nation and the concepts associated with it. such as 'nationalism', 'nationality' and 'national'.

The Indian nationalists Gandhi met in London in 1909 relied on the presumed efficacy of violence. This was the chief defect on their nationalism and Gandhi wanted to remove this defect. That is why Gandhi thinks of nation in terms of Praja rather than that of Rashtra. For

Gandhi Praja underlined the idea of people of community, where as Rashtra underlined that of power, as Aurobindo Ghosh refers to the 'nationalist committee' set up by the extremist party at the Surat congress as Rashtriya Mandali. According to Gandhi, Indians are in the first instance a Praja, and only, secondarily are they the speakers of this or that language, religion or region. Gandhian term, Praja helps to bring out the notion that Indians taken as a whole constitute one democratic entity.

Gandhian concept of nation raises some basic issues, which have been related to the continuity and change of the concept of nationalism:

- 1) Against those who assert that India is not a nation, Gandhi argues that India is indeed a nation. Gandhi believes that ancient Indian civilization had an accommodating capacity and that in ancient India, the Acharyas, in founding certain places of pilgrimage, laid the basis for the evolution of an all-India consciousness. Indian civilization was open to non-Hindu ideas and values.
- 2) The reader in *Hind Swaraj* asks: "Has the introduction of Mahomedanism not unmade the nation?"<sup>8</sup> To which the editor (Gandhi) answers, "India cannot cease to be one nation because people belonging to different religions live in it. The introduction of foreigners, does not necessarily destroy the nation, they merge in it. A country is one nation only when such a condition obtains in it. That country must have a faculty for assimilation. India has ever been such a country. In reality there are as many religions, as there are individuals, but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another's religion. If they do, they are not fit to be considered a nation... In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms: nor has it ever been so in India"<sup>9</sup> Gandhi's position of religion and Nationalism can be expressed by his choice between a unified nation and cow protection. Gandhi was prepared to opt for the unified nation.
- 3) Regarding language question, Gandhi considers mother tongue as the primary basis of the cultural life of each province and at the same time, he clearly recognizes that English has to be used to bring about the further growth of the mother tongue. Gandhi prefers translations for the purpose. For Gandhi English should be for the scientific education and mother tongue for ethical education, Gandhi attempted to show that, English education need not have a denationalizing effect on Indians. However, as for a common language for Indians, Gandhi prefers Hindi with the option of writing it in Persian or Nagari characters. Gandhi proposes rather an elaborate scheme of making the language issue consistent with the demands of Indian Nationalism.
- 4) Gandhi found a danger of Indian nationalism becoming by the turn of the century, more and more like the violent nationalism of the west; hence he argued that the congress was

the first institution which had enthused us with the idea of nationality. It brought together Indians from different parts of India. Gandhi identifies only three Congress nationalists by name, Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Badrudin Tyabji - a parsi, a Hindu and a Muslim, respectively. India's claim to being a Praja could be substantiated by the list. According to Gandhi, Hume and Wedderburn played the significant role in the rise and development of Congress nationalism. Gandhi believed in the fact that Indians and British could work together and nourish Indian nationalism.

- 5) According to Gandhi, Indian nationalism should produce a form of self rule in which the whole community is free and active. Gandhi rejects the notion that government by the national elite is beneficial because it is governed by the national elite. Secondly Gandhi admits that soul force, not brute force, should form the basis of public order. That is why Gandhian nationalism develops the right relationship between the principle of daya and national interest.

In sum, Gandhi developed certain philosophical concepts, based on the cultural practices and values of the small communities, in the interiors of the Indian sub-continent that had been forgotten or underestimated during the English Raj. He turned his eyes to the small communities where the Indian values had been kept away from western influence. Hence, he imagined the Indian nation from the values of those communities based on his readings of the sacred texts like the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana. However, Gandhi found inspiration on moral, civics and economy in the texts of writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Ruskin, Emerson and Thoreau. That is to say Gandhi links Indian thought to western thought and western thought to Indian thought. He uses an Indian philosophical framework to integrate the ideas that it takes from the west.

In the first half of the twentieth century, three conceptions of national identity were in predominance in India. They were 'the separatist religious national identity' propounded by M. A. Jinnah and Maulana Mawadudi, 'the ethnic national identity' propounded by V. D. Savarkar and M. S. Golwalkar, and 'the civic national identity' propounded by Gandhi and others, including Tagore and Nehru. Of these, the first led to partition, the second to the Assassination of Gandhi, and the third to emergence of the democratic, secular pluralistic, multireligious, multilingual, multiethnic, civic nation of Modern India.

A fourth contestant, Indian communism, entered the field in the 1920's. It sought (and still seeks) to define India and Indian identity in terms of Karl Marx or Mao or even Gramsci. Indian communism's defiance of Western economic and political power is matched only by its intellectual surrender to what is a western ideology.

The civic nationalism of Gandhi faces challenges from religious nationalism, ethnic nationalism and Indian communism. Unless it meets these challenges successfully, India is likely to be fractured again or at least turned into a very violent place.

According to civic nationalism an Indian is, first, a subject of Swaraj, i.e. one capable of self determination and self development. Secondly, he or she is a bearer of inalienable fundamental rights. The concepts of Swaraj and fundamental rights taken together constitute the fundamental identity of the modern Indian. It does so despite the sub national identities based on religion, language, region, ethnicity, caste or tribe which it recognizes as legitimate and seeks to accommodate within its framework. India as a civic nation exists to protect and promote the twin capacities for Swaraj and fundamental rights of every Indian. What are common to all Indians are these twin capacities. They may differ in every other respect; but they share the capacities for Swaraj and rights as their common possession.

Late in his life (1946) Gandhi employed a marvelous metaphor to express his idea of India as a civic nation: the metaphor of the Oceanic Circle. The term 'oceanic' connotes inclusiveness and openness. The individual – the subject of Swaraj and the bearer of rights – is the centre from which the Oceanic circle is drawn. Indian's may draw as many inner circles as they wish, so long as they stay within the outer circumference of him Oceanic Circle. The Oceanic Circle has room for everyone, and that too on equal terms. Briefly, the fundamental identity of Indians based on the concepts of Swaraj and fundamental rights coexists and harmonizes with their specific, sub-national identities based on religion, language, region etc. The Oceanic Circle is Gandhi's response to Savarkar and Jinnah, and all those who support separatist or divisive type of nationalism in India.

However, an analytical study of Lokmanya Tilak and Nationalism makes us a proper distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva, since Tilak focused on Hinduism but he was never the supporter of Hindutva. It is also noteworthy that there was no binary opposition between Gandhi and Tilak as compared to Savarkar and Golwllakar, or Jinnah and Maulana Mawadadi. In fact the emergence of democratic, secular, pluralistic, multireligious, multilingual, multiethnic, civic nation of modern India had its roots in Lokmanya Tilak's political ideology because Tilak was a predecessor of Gandhi in the Indian freedom movement and Gandhi developed his movement on the edifice built by Tilak. At the same time there is a continuation of Gandhian ideology during Nehru era in respect of democratization of Indian Politics. Therefore, Dr. Ashok Chousalkar has rightly pointed out that "Tilak's politics evolved around four principles such as Swaraj, Swadeshi, National Education and boycott and Gandhi developed his future politics on the basis of these ideas only"<sup>10</sup>.

Tilak and Gandhi had much in common values such as Indian traditional thinking and its influencing factors. Both of them cherished the term Swaraj which is basically Vedic and has political meaning referring to political power and autonomy. The same term has entered in the spiritual metaphysics in which a person attaining spiritual eminence is supposed to achieve Swarajya. Tilak gave a moral and spiritual meaning to the term which is intensified by Gandhi. The major problem which was dominated in the world views of Tilak and Gandhi was in the



context of the British Rule in India and their exploitation of Indians. But Tilak and Gandhi, both, represent a fusion of some dominant conception of Indian thought and nationalism of Modern west to form Indian nationalism. In other words, both of them had their own meaning of Swaraj which leads ultimately towards Home Rule.

Tilak as well as Gandhi felt that nationalism was essentially a psychological and spiritual conception. Hence both of them advocated the spiritual side of nationalism. As a political leader Tilak symbolized religious traditions of the people, hence advocated Hinduism but not Hindutva. Therefore, the 'Gita Rahasya' was written by Tilak to propound the idea that Gita taught us to perform our duties in a spirit of selflessness and with knowledge of the self. Dr. Ashok Chousalkar argues that, "Tilak did not support violence and said that it should be used in the rarest of rare cases. Mahatma Gandhi was obviously impressed by Tilak's interpretation and said that performance of one's own duties in the spirit of detachment was message of the Gita. He (Gandhi) further developed and improved upon Tilak's interpretation of the Gita but he acknowledged the greatness of the 'Gita Rahasya'<sup>11</sup>. Hinduism, for Gandhi and Tilak, had nothing to do with Hindutva because Tilak and Gandhi both were interpreting the Gita in a new political discourse in modern Indian political thought, which claimed that service of the people was service of God. Tilak as well as Gandhi, both were in mass leadership hence they were interested in welfare of the people only.

According to Tilak, India was a nation in ancient days; likewise, Gandhi argues that India is indeed a nation. So for Tilak and Gandhi, building up the nation was not a new adventure for Indians in the modern times. Tilak, like Gandhi, emphasized a nation, however both of them never neglected English as a global language. Tilak and Gandhi had in their mind the language issue consistent with the demands of Indian nationalism.

Gandhi and Savarkar represented two alternatives of Nationalism and Hinduism but Tilak and Gandhi did not represent two opposed concepts of Nationalism and Hinduism. Tilak, unlike Savarkar, was not opposed to Muslims. He played the historic role in consummating the Lucknow Pact (1916) in which the Muslims were generously given more than their due share of seats in the legislative councils. At that time, Tilak appealed to the Government to hold the balance even between the two communities and to settle their differences impartially. Tilak argued that if a fanatic Hindu entered a Muslim Mohalla and tried to rescue a cow from a butcher's shop, his excessive religious zeal must be considered punishable. Similarly, if a Muslim said that his prayer is disturbed if a procession of Hindu devotees passes by a Mosque on Ganesh Chaturthi to the accompaniment of music, he must be made to see that he was wrong. It was Lokmanya Tilak who supported Lucknow Pact and the conference showed that Hindu-Muslim unity had been restored between the two groups and in this sense the conference was a great success. It is also noteworthy that Gandhi was also present at that conference.

An authentic reference can be had regarding Tilak's democratic, secular, pluralistic, multireligious, multilingual and multiethnic, ideology by providing the manifesto of the congress democratic party. In fact, Tilak, like Gandhi, wanted to establish secular and democratic federal state in India. Tilak was the President of the Congress Democratic Party. The Manifesto of the Congress Democratic Party, it was clear from the name, pledged its faith in the congress and in democracy. The party accepted the tenet of religious toleration. The party supported the claims of the Muslims for the solution of the Khilafat question according to the Muslim dogmas and beliefs and tenet of the Koaran. It welcomed the formation of the League of Nations. The Congress Democratic Party also supported the right to self determination of peoples and advocated the cause of Khilafat in civic manner. The party supported for the protection of rights of minorities. The manifesto of the Congress Democratic Party remained the last political will and testament of Tilak. It believed in the potency of democratic doctrines for the solution of Indian problems. It, further, advocated the removal of all civic secular or social disabilities based on caste or custom.

Therefore, Dr. Ashok Chousalkar asserts 'Tilak was a predecessor of Gandhi in the Indian freedom movement and Gandhi developed his movement on the edifice built by Tilak. There is continuation of Tilak's politics during the Gandhian phase in respect of democratization of Indian Politics, anticolonialism, theory of passive resistance, and his interpretation of Gita'<sup>12</sup>.

In sum it can be stated that Indian nationalism, means many things to everyone as the differences of the various views and approaches which are always Kaleidoscopic. But it is also noteworthy that the metaphor of the Oceanic Circle employed by Gandhi to express his idea of India as a civic nation is his response to all those who support divisive nationalism in India but it is consistent with political legacy of Lokmanya Tilak that is of with Tilak's Indian Nationalism.

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