


METAXOLOGICAL SENSE IN M.K. GANDHI'S HIND SWARAJ: APERSPECTIVE**Rinson George, Dr. John Joseph Kennedy****Christ (Deemed to be University)****Abstract**

Mahatma Gandhi was a unique freedom fighter who used nonviolence for the liberation of India. His contribution towards Swaraj brings an integral revolution in all spheres of life. Swaraj of people means freedom for the meanest of the country men. From political point of view, it is a self-government but at the individual level, it is connected with the capacity for self-assessment, self-purification and self-reliance. It is the fruit of patience, perseverance, ceaseless toil, courage and intellectual appreciation of the environment. Gandhian studies transcend the barriers of time and it is relevant today as much as it was during his period. The exploration of the book *Hind Swaraj* emphasizes the relevance of Gandhian studies in managing our country's real challenges. Gandhi's vision of man and society is to make individual and social life worthy of existence. He wanted to bring changes in the world through change in heart. The analysis of the discourse of the book *Hind Swaraj* tries to bring out the unique form of relationship established by the Reader and the Editor. This exploration leads to the affirmation of otherness and togetherness which emphasises the metaxological sense of being which presents the relation between the mind and being between self and other. The metaxological sense of plurality aims at the transcendence of being.

Key words: Swaraj, dialogue, Interpersonal relationships, Metaxology

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1. Introduction

The book *Hind Swaraj* critiques western contemporary civilisation and attempts to outline a new civilization to make individual and social life worthy of existence (Madhual 1). By using nonviolence and civil disobedience, the greatest leader inspires the whole world. Swaraj was the goal of the freedom struggle. Swaraj, from an individual perspective, means self-control but from the view of a country, freedom of the country from the British, and from community level, it is the freedom of the village (Rout 1). Swaraj aims at the objectives of empowering the state and the people. Hind Swaraj is generally considered as a work which speaks about the political freedom of the people but the way how it tries to bring the concept through a mode of conversation between the editor and the reader brings attraction of many. Even though the thought which represents the editor and the reader are of the same person, the way it tries to establish is worth analysing. The mode of conversation represented in the book speaks about a mode of interpersonal relationship similar to the concept of metaxology proposed by William Desmond, an Irish philosopher. The more importance given to individualism and the effects of globalization and negative form of nationalism challenges the interpersonal relationships. William Desmond understands the problems of dualism and brings a space which embraces plurality. This paper investigates the importance of interpersonal relationships emphasised in the *Hind Swaraj* from the philosophical perspectives of metaxology proposed by William Desmond.

2. Philosophy is viewed as a seeker

The role of a philosopher is to come out of preconceived notions to knowledge of truth by seeking. According to William Desmond, Metaxological thinking involves more of seeking truth than claims of truth. "Seeking the truth and claiming to know the truth are entirely two different things" (McHenry 48). Within Metaxology, the philosopher is viewed as a seeker rather than master who imposes the categorical structures in grand system. In the book *Hind*

Swaraj, Gandhi poses certain questions to go beyond the preconceived notions which help them to understand the truth (*Hind Swaraj* 1). He goes beyond the general understanding that Home rule was created among us by pointing out how the writings of Hume has inspired us to achieve the objects of the congress. He also brings to our notice how Sir William Wedderburn has given his body, mind and money to bring the concept of home rule among the people. Only a seeker of truth can continue to search for truth even though the finding may not please one.

The ability to respond to the questions will bring the person to the knowledge. Gandhi is ready to respond to the question of when and how the real awakening took place (6). Gandhi compares it to the growth of a seed under the ground, which gets destroyed under the tree is not seen and it is visible only when it comes above the earth. Gandhi also compares the mind of a person with a restless bird. He points out the tendency of the human mind which remains always unsatisfied even though it gets more than what it requires. The true nature of a seeker is understood when he speaks about the happiness. According to him, it is not the wealth it makes the person happy but the mental condition, and because of this reason, even a poor person can also become happy(37). This search for truth is a continuous process and it has to be continued till one attains perfection in life.

3. Different voices in the same room

Desmond was influenced by plurality of different thoughts than single source of allegiance. His philosophy takes into account of the interaction between different voices in the same room rather than diverse voices in different rooms(*Being Between: Irish Thought*9-11). There are instances in the *Hind Swaraj* which embrace plurality of thoughts. *Hind Swaraj* is written in the form of a dialogue between the reader and the editor wherein, the reader consistently demands that the British should leave the country to bring home rule in our country. But the editor brings a counter question whether it is necessary to drive away the English if we get

what we want. Gandhi compares the British parliament to a sterile woman and a prostitute. He compares the parliament with a sterile woman because it cannot do anything without a force from outside, and to a prostitute because it is always under the pressure of ministers who change from time to time (*Hind Swaraj* 12). At the same time, the reader's voice disputes the fact that the term sterile woman is not applicable because it is the quality of the parliament to work according to the public pressure being elected by the people. Gandhi questions the usage of parliament as a 'baby' even after existing for seven hundred years and questions when it will grow out of its babyhood. According to Gandhi, India should not copy England because the voters are influenced by the newspapers which interpret the same fact differently (14).

Gandhi tries to explore different voices about civilization as it is not known to people even though many books have been written about civilization. Gandhi compares it with a dream where the dreamer believes in the dream while he is dreaming but realises only when he awakens from the dream. The writers hypnotize the readers undoubtedly by defending the civilization (15). According to Gandhi, this civilization does not take care of morality and religion. It often teaches immorality in the form of morality. The civilization which tries to improve the bodily comforts fails in providing bodily comforts. Gandhi rejects the idea that the English have taken India by sword. It is Indians who keep the English in India. He agrees with what Napoleon has said about the English as a nation of shopkeepers. Commerce is their major objective which their army and navy support it.

Gandhi's opinion about doctors shows that considerations are brought from every angle in order to understand how they forget to do what they are supposed to do. According to Gandhi, it is the lack of proper self-control that leads to diseases. The primary duty of a doctor is to keep the body out of diseases. One has to attain mastery over oneself in order to be freed from vice and to become happy. Gandhi points out that hospitals become one of the reasons

for the increase of immorality because people take less care of the body since they have the hope that it can be restored with the help of hospitals and doctors. He also questions the intention behind the doctors to obtain riches and fame in the society. For the sake of caring the human body, they kill thousands of animals. All these arguments prove that Gandhian concept takes into consideration different voices which speak about the different angles of life.

4. Affirming otherness and togetherness

According to William Desmond, the way to establish metaxological relationship is through the affirmation of the other. He states that affirming otherness and togetherness leads to metaxological sense of being to present the relation between the mind and the being between self and other (Kelly 2). In the dialogue between the reader and the editor, the reader states that the English governors are not the well-wishers of India. The editor tells that we should not speak about those great people with such disrespect. According to the editor, we also should look at the contributions they have made to our country. Some of the English men pointed out how the English men persecuted India and how they continue to exploit. The first step to bring metaxological relationship is seen when they try to affirm the presence of other. The editor affirms, “We shall become useless, if we lack respect for our elders, only men with mature thoughts are capable of ruling themselves and not the hasty-tempered” (*Hind Swaraj* 3). The first step towards metaxological relationship is accepting others. The conversation between the reader and the editor proves that they accept the other. The reader accepts the fact that the editor’s understanding about Swaraj is entirely different from the reader. The reader says, “I fear that our interpretation is not the same as yours”(9). Understanding the other opens a possibility of a dialogue which leads to a responsible relationship. Affirming the other also means understanding the difference in the nature of the other. The editor asks to differentiate between the nature of the tiger and the tiger. The idea

about the home rule is similar to the rule of the English but without their presence. The editor affirms that the ruling will be similar to the English and we will be known as Englistan instead of Hindustan. The ability to understand the difference between the self and other will lead to establishing a metaxological relationship. Gandhi compares the difference between the old civilization and new civilization. The main difference he finds between the old and new civilizations is the temptation offered by money and of the luxuries that money can buy (16). The comparison on the mode of agriculture, the clothes that they wear, the books they write and print, and mode of travel people select shows the inclination towards money and luxury. The other side of the civilization is that even though the number of doctors and hospitals have increased, diseases also increase along with them. According to Gandhi, we should fight against the religious superstitions without disregarding the religion. These examples show how important it is to affirm the existence of other to establish a metaxological relationship.

5. Relational and communal aspects of interpersonal relationships

According to William Desmond, philosophy is a source of meaningful human condition. The fuller meaning of metaxological condition is discussed as being true and being good (Being and Between, xii). He gives a relational and communal account to one's relation with the otherness (Kelly 4). Gandhi gives importance to this communal aspect in *Hind Swaraj*. According to Gandhi, it is a bad habit to consider others as enemies when their views are different. One should not claim one's thought as the only good thought. One has to get away from the prejudiced mentality to arrive at the communal aspect of life (4). Gandhi says that division is not a good thing for our country and our leaders should not be divided as moderates and extremists. The division which is created in the mind of the people will not last for ever but it depends upon the leaders how long they last (7).

In the dialogue between the reader and the editor, the reader raises a question to the editor how it can be one nation since it has Mahomedans, Parsis and Christians. The reason why he raises the question is that Mahomedans and Hindus are old enemies. Hindus worship the cow while Mahomedans kill it. When we meet such differences, how can India be one nation? According to Gandhi, "The Hindus, the Mohomedans, the Parsis and the Christians, who have made India their country, are fellow countrymen, and they will have to live in unity." It is similar to taking different roads to reach the same goal (28). Gandhi gives some guidance to overcome the different approach towards the cow by Hindus and Mahomedans. In order to protect the cow, one should approach Mahomedans and request them not to kill for the sake of the country. One may sacrifice life to save her but not supposed to take the life of our brethren (29). According to Gandhi, home rule is possible only when passive resistance becomes the guiding force of the people (57).

6. Transcending towards the genuine other

According to William Desmond, the ability to transcend towards a genuine other is the primary quality of a human being (*Between System and Poetics* 4). Desmond understands the notion of transcendence in more than one way. The word in its origin *trans scandere* means stepping over a limit. It could be seen in two different ways as stepping over a limit or as being beyond the limit. According to him, "To be human is to transcend, and to cease to transcend is to cease to be" (4). Gandhi, in his writing, gives importance for the ability to transcend towards a genuine other. There is a good example in the *Hind Swaraj*, where Gandhi gives a way how to stop a thief from his stealing habit without losing the inner peace of the person and disturbing the neighbour. Gandhi asks to keep the door and windows open and keep things most accessible to the robber. Even though the robber may take away the things and his mind will get agitated, he will learn about a broad and loving heart. The robber may even return the things and leave the stealing habit. Gandhi proposes a means to have a

different approach for a totally different result. In many cases, a fair means can produce a fair result. Gandhi strongly believes that the force of love is greater than the force of arms (*Hind Swaraj* 49). Gandhi emphasises that there are so many men who live in the world shows that the force of the truth and love is greater than the force of arms (53).

Gandhi states that the courage required to approach a person with a smiling face is more than the courage required to blow others into pieces behind a cannon. It requires courage to become a passive resister. Control over the mind is the necessary requirement to become a passive resister.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the *Hind Swaraj* explains that the relation between the reader and the editor, and different people mentioned in the work, have similarity with the metaxological relationship proposed by William Desmond. The main characteristics of metaxological relationships such as affirming the otherness and togetherness, the ability to embrace different voices in the same room and cultural diversity, the ability to maintain relational and communal aspects, the ability to transcend towards the other are visible in the work. In the conclusion of the work *Hind Swaraj*, the reader points out that the editor will form a third party because he is neither an extremist nor a moderate. Gandhian writings, especially *Hind Swaraj*, is relevant even today because of the mode of relationships established through the writing.

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