



Scope and Significance of Swadeshi Under Globalization

Research Paper—Economics

* Dr. Balaji Kamble

Introduction :- Some people define globalization in terms of an open economy, which is open to the international processes of capital accumulation and distribution. A few describe it as a process of exploitation of poor countries by the companies of the developed world and in a way they designate the same as a refined route of colonialism. Others present it as the process of enhancing collective measures to stop international violence and wars, to save global environment and to eliminate the Third World poverty and economic inequality and numerous other disparities through developed communications, financial investments, trade and financial assistance. In fact, to them globalization means that “bigger is always better” in place of “small is beautiful”. The multinational companies claim to provide the consumer goods to the masses at cheaper and at affordable rates and lure the people to provide them the adequate employment also. It must be noted here that if we go back to the historical background of this important issue, we will find two root factors responsible for the current global malaise as given under:

1. Craze for Massive and reckless industrialization
2. Dehumanization of Science, technology and indigenous industry for more and more material gains.

Accordingly, in the name of globalization the goods are being produced recklessly on large scale and the same have to be sold for consumption, which require a huge open market to serve the purpose. In this respect the examples of the Time Magazine imperialism of CNN neo-colonialism are worth quoting. In fact the globalized messages of racism, sexism, religionism, dogmatism, ethnicism and jingoism have been flourishing through the imperialist of media. These narrow-minded messages, which are used to boost industrialization, have also caused communal antagonisms and bloodshed on national and international levels. Moreover, it has also been established that huge industrialization is not possible without globalized colonialism and colonialism is unavoidable for global industries. As a result, unemployed workers create strains and stresses on the economic-political system. The Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries got rid of its surplus unwanted population by shipping them out to new countries. These days, millions of descendants of European ancestry are spread around the world. Such

kind of history is not advisable to be repeated to help the industrialization of the Third-World countries. Likewise, the “techno-industrial military complex” also became the powerful vehicle of militarization, world wide and colonization and every technological improvement was quickly translated into more and more destructive weaponry. Accordingly, this has been the legacy of globalization of massive industrialization and now the contemporary advocates of globalization are shouting slogans that what is good for the developed west is also good for the poor and developing countries.

And, the haunting fact remains that the United State, one country out of 185, uses up nearly 40 per cent of the resources of the world itself. The propounders, supporters and advocates of globalization are pushing free trade treaties and Multinational agreements on Investments (MAI). They have formed free trade zones, NAFTA, ECM, WTO, etc. Free trade and investment are undoubtedly profitable for the developed countries, but its utility or usefulness to the Third World nations is quite doubtful, rather it is dubious one. The recent economic collapse of Asia’s ‘minor dragons’ betrayed the Asian Countries is the manifestation and net result of globalization that is being advocated by multinational companies, the IMF and the World Bank as in the recent past the economic troubles of Asia led to a bailout programme by World Bank and International Monetary Fund. In this respect the most interesting point has been that some of the conditions imposed were the hiring of workers, raising of taxes and interest rates, reduction on social expenditures and so on so forth. Therefore, it is true when someone tries to justify that free trade is the weapon of the strong and protectionism is the shield of the weak.

Swadeshi as an Alternative-As a matter of fact, now the scholars have been feeling that globalization is not the panacea for the contemporary world crises rather it is increasing and deepening these crises. In this respect, Gandhi’s approach to Swadeshi (self-reliance) seems to be quite relevant and very significant as he has been a great advocate and supporter of the use of local indigenous industry or small-scale (industries which are primarily built upon national self-reliance) and self-sufficiency (Swadeshi and

*Lecturer & Head, Dept. of Economics, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar College, Latur.

Swavlamban), minimum surpluses, which will lead to devolution and decentralization of economic productivity. And such productivity will certainly reduce science-technology to the level suitable to small-scale industries, will reduce the need for raw materials, energy and pollution, and will reduce colonialization, militarization and massive wars.

Though Gandhi did not coin the term 'Swadeshi', yet he contributed a lot in this respect by infusing new meanings to it. His understanding and approach to Swadeshi seems to be very dynamic, scientific, and more convincing. In the field of economics, the principle of Swadeshi means that a person basically uses those things, which are produced, in his immediate neighbourhood and serves those industries by making them efficient and meaningful. By giving the best illustration, Gandhi explains: "Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote... In the domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting".¹⁰ Furthermore, Gandhi is quite clear that his insistence on priority for the immediate neighbor will not mean injury to or unconcern for the interest of those who are not in the neighborhood.

Regarding the third question of an element of hatred or chauvinism for the foreigner it may be added here that Gandhi's arguments in this case were as under: "I have never been an advocate of prohibition of all foreign things because they are foreign. My economic creed is a complete taboo in respect of all foreign commodities whose importation is likely to prove harmful to our indigenous interest. This means that we may not in any circumstance import a commodity that can be adequately supplied from our own country. For instance, I would regard it a sin to import Australian wheat on the score of its better quality, but I would not have the slightest hesitation in importing oatmeal from Scotland, if an absolute necessity for it is made out, because we do not grow oats in India. In other words, I would not countenance the boycott of a single foreign article out of ill-will or feeling of hatred"

On the contrary, he pointed out that India produced a sufficient quantity of leather and "it is my duty, therefore, to wear shoes made out of Indian leather only, even if it is comparatively dearer and of an inferior quality, in preference to cheaper and superior quality foreign leather shoes. It will be thus clear from the above that it is hardly possible for me to give an exhaustive catalogue of foreign articles whose importation in India ought to be prohibited. I have simply inculcated the general principle by which we can be guided in all such cases. And this principle will hold

good in future, too, so long as the conditions of production in our country remain as they are today". Similarly, in the economic field, our activities are oriented towards the production and consumption of goods and services for the satisfaction of our wants. Let us see how Gandhi's philosophy applies to both these fields. In production, one will have to give priority to the utilization or employment of local resources in material and manpower in consumption too one will have to give priority to what is manufactured locally. The second argument is that indigenous products are costlier, more expensive. If we follow these arguments and switch to or prefer goods manufactured in other countries, we will put our neighbour out of employment and contribute to a money drain that will benefit other countries at the cost of our nation. As a result the spirit of Swadeshi would certainly demand that one should work for the improvement of our skills, improve our technology and improve the quality and excellence of our goods, and put up with poorer quality till such time as we improve the quality of our goods. In reality the spirit of Swadeshi thus acts as an incentive to improve our technology. And, there is nothing in the philosophy of Swadeshi that asks us to be content with archaic or ineffective technology or to abjure the upward gradation of technology.

The ongoing discussion clearly indicates that to Gandhi, Swadeshi is both a principle of evolution or construction, a creative principle, as well as an instrument of struggle for the economic regeneration of the masses. Besides, Swadeshi is equally valid in all spheres of human activity and all spheres in which man is capable of evolution. The stream of culture demands that we should not uproot ourselves from our heritage, which has taken its shape and texture from the thoughts and efforts of those who are, and who were proximate to us. To be ignorant of this heritage or to repudiate it is inconsistent with the spirit of Swadeshi as it is the base on which one builds. Therefore, one should contribute to its improvement or enrichment. This needs a lot of introspection and one must be able to detect and remove deficiencies and whatever is untenable. Besides, one should not fear any exposure to other cultural heritage. Rather, one should absorb whatever one finds it. However, one should not allow one's roots to wither away or be eroded.

Gandhi has very beautifully presented his ideas in the following words: "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides, and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to blow about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. Mine is not a religion of the prison house". In fact Swadeshi is a dynamic concept and it is much more relevant and significant in the present context in which multinational companies have already entered in every nook and corner all-around

the world. India is not an exception in this field. Some people think and claim that the days of Swadeshi are already gone and now it is the age of globalization and multinationals. They argue that Swadeshi is irrelevant and thus would be misfit under the present economic scenario.

After the entry of the multinationals in India, the situation has not improved at all. Rather, India has been dubbed as a land of bootleggers, smugglers and black-marketers. Firstly, the thirst for power, pelf and position of the political big-wigs remains unquenched and sound democratic practices are thrown to the winds. The fundamental rights guaranteed by the original Constitution are no longer fundamental now. The increasing statism, the denigration of the judiciary, the criminalization of politics, the politicization of criminals and sedulous promotion of personality cult are complete negation of democratic principles. At present politics has become the most paying profession. Rank political opportunism has become the rule of the day. Corruption is being institutionalized and it has also been said that now India has become a land of whiners, grumblers, gamblers and fault-finders.

In such an economic-political set-up, with booming population and meager capital, what is the way out? The need of the hour is to reverse the country's economic policy with a view to redistributing income to attain economic freedom, to fulfill basic material needs of every citizen and to develop a self-reliant economy. Our political freedom is incomplete without economic independence. The deepening economic crisis should open our eyes. We should not ape alien models of economic progress. We should evolve an indigenous model based on our culture, our past traditions, present requirements and aspiration for the future. We must devise an economic system based on materialistic management and humanistic economics (integral humanism) and create an infrastructure in which and by which the inherent potentialities of man may find their highest fulfillment. The man the integral man (and his happiness) must be the centre of this system. Swadeshi may provide an alternative. As a matter of fact, the significance and importance of Swadeshi cannot be minimized or underestimated even in the days of Globalization. Swadeshi, through decentralised rural industry and village arts and crafts alone, can provide employ-

ment and steady income and help reduce poverty of the millions. Trained in the Western way, we often forget that 'Small is Beautiful'. We should aim at gross village product (GVP) instead of GNP. Rightly did Gandhi declare in the forties, "Cut down your wants and at once all your economic problems will be solved". However, in spite of the logic in the above contentions, people are still sceptical about the concept of Swadeshi, which they ridicule as old-fashioned and reactionary. The craze for foreign articles among the country's elite has no limit.

Their possession has become a status symbol. Such an attitude is not a healthy one it will hamper the country's progress and development. We lose our individuality and become slaves once again. Therefore we must revive the spirit of Swadeshi and encourage the use of Indian goods, Indian resources and modernise indigenous technology. Swadeshi in consumption is essential for evolving a self-reliant economy. The positive content of Swadeshi should be used as the cornerstone for the reconstruction of our economy. Gandhi had developed Swadeshi movement during our struggle for freedom as a weapon to cut the roots of colonial economic interests and exploitation as well as to utilize our own local resources and manpower to the maximum. Now the time has come to rebuild the same spirit of Swadeshi and self-reliance to defeat the evil design of neo-imperialistic economic vested interests of multi-nationals and advanced nations. Sometimes, one has to face the music of too much liberalization as the side effects prove to be very dangerous and fatal ones. Our multi-crore security scams and other scandals are the best illustrations in this respect. Undoubtedly, India needs rapid economic development, however, it is not possible without inculcating the spirit of Swadeshi, self-reliance and self-confidence. For this purpose there is an immediate need to understand the meaning of true Swadeshi which means lesser dependence on foreign goods and maximum use of our own resources keeping in view the basic needs of our immediate surroundings without neglecting the universal human element and Swadeshi is the only way out to solve the problem of exploitation and inequality caused by globalization. One must understand and know the fact that Globalization of Western Culture will never solve our problems and here lies the importance of Swadeshi, which gives the message of self-reliance and interdependence wherever it is necessary.

REFERENCE

1. Naidu, M.V., "Development and Peace: An Attempt at Conceptualization of Initial Development", in Naidu, M.V. (ed.), War, Security and Peace, M.I.T.A. Press, Ontario, 1996, pp. 415-16.
2. Naidu, M.V., Dimension of Peace, M.I.T.A. Press, Ontario, 1996, pp. 222-23
3. MacBride, Scan, Many Voices, One World, Unesco and Kogan Press, London, 1980, p. 125."
4. Gandhi, M. K., Young India, 18-6-1931. See also Gandhi, M.K. From Yeravda Mandir, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, January 1986, Reprinted, p. 38.
5. Varma, Ravindra, "Gandhi's Philosophy of Swadeshi" in Gangrade, K. D. & Radhakrishnan, N. (eds.), Gandhi and The Changing Facets of India, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, New Delhi, 1998, p. 26.
6. Gandhi, M. K., Young India, 15-11-1928.
16. Varma, Ravindra, "Gandhi's Philosophy of Swadeshi", op. cit., pp. 27-28.