

## Swaraj of My Dreams\*

Mahatma Gandhi

1. In this structure (of Swaraj) composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual, always ready to perish for the circle of villages till at last the whole becomes one life composed individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral unit....therefore the outermost circle (the nation) will not wield power to crush the inner circles but give strength to all within and derive its own from the centre (the individual citizen).....we are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of this earth. The mightiest of winds cannot shake it.
2. It has been said that Indian swaraj will be the rule of the majority community, the Hindus. There could not be a greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it swaraj and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all people, it is the rule of equal justice.
3. Swaraj can be maintained only where there is a majority of loyal and patriotic citizens for whom the good of the nation is paramount above all other considerations whatever, including their personal profit. Swaraj means government by the many. Where the many are immoral and selfish, their government can spell anarchy and nothing else.
4. My notion of 'Poorna Swaraj' is not isolated independence but healthy and dignified independence. My nationalism fierce though it is, is not exclusive, is not designed to harm any nation or individual. Legal maxims are not so legal as they are moral. I believe in the eternal truth of the saying "use thy own property so as not to injure thy neighbour's."
5. The Kisan or the peasant of India, whether a landless labourer or a laboring proprietor, comes first in my picture of swaraj. He is the salt of the earth which rightly belongs or should belong to him, not to the absentee landlord or Zamindar. I have no doubt that if we have democratic swaraj as it must be if the freedom is won through non-violence, the Kisan must hold power in all its phases including political power.
6. Economic equality is the master key to non-violent Independence; Working for economic equality means abolishing the external conflict between capital and labour. It means the leveling up down of

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the few rich on the one hand, and a leveling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility as long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class cannot last in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land.

7. Democracy or the Swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for their use would be to remove all opposition or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated ahimsa.
8. I have repeatedly observed that no school of thought can claim a monopoly of right judgment. We are all liable to err and are often obliged to revise our judgments. In a vast country like this, there must be room for all schools of honest thought and, if we cannot accept it, respect it as fully as we expect them to respect ours. It is one of the indispensable tests of a healthy public-life and therefore fitness for swaraj.
9. I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirement of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have to learn to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society enriches both the individual and the society of which one is a member.
10. If the individual ceases to count, what is left of society? Individual freedom alone can make a man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the service of society. If it is forcibly wrested from him, he becomes an automation and society is ruined. No society can possibly be built on a detail of individual freedom.
11. We are inheritors of rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the and the climate of the country have, in my opinion, destined it for a rural civilization. Its defects are well known, but not one of them is irremediable. To uproot it and substitute for it an urban civilization seems to me an impossibility, unless we are prepared by some drastic means to reduce the population from three hundred millions to three or say even thirty. I can therefore suggest remedies on the assumption that we must perpetuate the present rural civilization and endeavour to rid it of its acknowledged defects. This can only be done if the youth of the country will settle down to village lives. And if they will do this, they must reconstruct their life and pass every day of their vacation in the villages surrounding their colleges and schools, they should think of settling down in villages.
12. 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. Thus, as for religion in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is, the use of my immediate religious surroundings. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. 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 neighbors and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. It is suggested that such Swadeshi if reduced to practice will lead to the millennium.

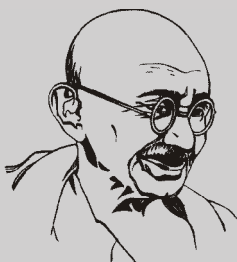
13. This nation had courts, lawyers and doctors, but they were all within moral bounds. Everyone knew that these professions were not particularly superior; moreover these vakils and vairs did not rob people. They were considered people's dependants, not their masters. Justice was tolerably fair. The ordinary rule was to avoid courts. There were no touts to lure people into them. This evil, too, was noticeable only in and around capitals. The common people lived independently and followed their agricultural occupation. They enjoyed true Home rule.
14. Villages have suffered long from neglect by those who have had the benefit of higher education. They have chosen the city life. The village movement is an attempt to establish healthy contact with the villages and find self expression in the dedicated service of the villagers.
15. I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later, the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in small face to face communities or villages. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in cities and palaces.
16. You must not imagine that I am envisaging our village life as it is today. My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men will not wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour. I can very well envisage all modern conveniences like railways, post and telegraph etc in village communities. For me it matters to obtain the real core of wellbeing and the rest themselves of their accord.
17. I would say that if the village perishes India will perish too. India will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the most modern machines and tools that they can make and afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of other.
18. We must train these masses of men who have a heart of gold, who want to be taught and led. But a few intelligent, sincere workers are needed, and the whole nation can be organized to act intelligently and democracy can be evolved out of mobocracy.
19. We have to make a choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as herself and the India of cities which are a creation

of foreign domination. Today cities dominate and drain the villages so that they are crumbling to ruin. Exploitation of villages is itself organized violence; we will have to give villages their proper place.

20. The whole programme of village reconstruction will be a structure on sand if it is not built on the solid foundation of economic equality. Economic equality can never be supposed to mean possession of an equal amount of all worldly goods by everyone. It does mean, however, that everyone will have a proper house to live in, sufficient and balanced diet to eat, and sufficient khadi with which to cover oneself. It also means that the cruel inequality that obtains today will be removed by purely nonviolent means.
21. Civilization in the real sense of the term consists not in the multiplication but in deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants which promotes real happiness and contentment and increases the capacity for service. One can reduce one's wants by perseverance and the reduction of wants makes for happiness--- a healthy body and peaceful mind.
22. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service. The law of the brute will be replaced by law of man.
23. All activities should be centered in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached all other rules of correct living will come without effort, and obedience to them will be instinctive. But without truth it is impossible to observe any principles or rules in life.
24. I am humble enough to admit that there is much that we can profitably assimilate from the west. Wisdom is no monopoly of one continent or one race. My resistance to western civilization is really a resistance to its indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumption that Asiatics are fit only to copy everything that comes from the West. I do believe that if India has patience enough to go through the fire of suffering and resist any unlawful encroachment upon her own civilization, which, imperfect though it undoubtedly is, has hitherto stood the ravages of time. She can make a lasting contribution to the peace and solid progress of the world.
25. India's destiny lies not along the bloody way of the West, of which she shows signs of tiredness, but along the bloodless way of peace that comes from a simple and godly life. India is in danger of losing her soul. She cannot lose it and live.  
  
She must not therefore, lazily and helplessly say, "I cannot escape the onrush from the West" She must be strong-enough to resist it for her own sake and that of the world.
26. I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? In other words will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.
27. All society is held together by non-violence, even as the earth is held in

her position by gravitation. But when the law of gravitation was discovered yielded results of which our ancestors has no knowledge. Even so when society is deliberately constructed in accordance with the law of non-violence, its structure will be different in material particulars from what it is today. But I cannot say in advance what the government based on nonviolence will be like. What the happening today is disregard of the law of non-violence and enthronement of violence as it was an eternal law.

28. Society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary co-operation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence.
29. A government cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-violent because it represents all the people. I do not today conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe to the possibility of a predominantly nonviolent society and I am working for it.
30. Holding the view that, without the recognition of nonviolence on a national scale, there is no such thing as a constitutional or democratic government, I devote my energy to the propogation of nonviolence as the law of our life-individual, social, political, national and international.
31. We have not had patience enough to wait and apply ourselves whole heartedly to the spread of nonviolence among the people as a means for political ends.
32. In the ideal non-violent state, there is no centralized political power because there is no state as understood today. But the idea is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement "That government is best which governs least".
33. While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of his will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum.
34. Swaraj of a people means the sum total of the swaraj (self rule) of individuals. And such swaraj comes only from performance by individuals of the duty as citizens. In it no one thinks only of his rights. They come when they are needed, for better performance of one's duties.
35. Centralization as a system is inconsistent with non-violent structure of society. Rurally organized India will run the risk of foreign invasion less than centralized and urbanished India with all its military, naval and air forces".



*Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.*

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*There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed.*

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*The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.*

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