

Rama Rajya : The Gandhian Versus the BJP Perspective

Introduction

The Bharatiya Janata party has been raising its voice quite clearly that Indian identity is synonymous with Hindu identity. It also claims that Indian nationalism can be rooted only in a Hindu ethos, and that only a Hindu *Rashtra* can be a true Indian polity. In this connection, *Rama Rajya* has been projected as the ideal type of reign which the Indian state has to be modelled after. Rama Rajya, according to the BJP, is the reign of King Ram, Son of Dhasaradha. Demolition of *Babri Masjid* at Ayodhya was even justified as a sort of preparation for the restoration of Lord Rama's reign.

The party president Lal Krishna Advani tried to link the BJP's stand to what he described as the "strand of opinion" voiced by Rajendra Prasad, Rajaji, Sardar Patel and above all Gandhiji. He even gave sanction to the communal usage of the term *Rama Rajya* by relating his usage with that of Mahatma Gandhi.

How mistaken is this kind of approach will be evident from Gandhi's own words :

Let no one commit the mistake of thinking that Rama Rajya means a rule of the Hindus. My Rama is another name for *Khuda* or God. I want *Khudai Raj* which is the same thing as the Kingdom of God on earth. The establishment of such Rajya would not only mean welfare of the whole of the Indian people but the whole world.¹

1. M. G. Gandhi, *Village Swaraj*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1962, p. 250.

It is, therefore, necessary to make a thorough inquiry into what exactly is meant by Rama Rajya in the perspective of Gandhi as opposed to that of the BJP. For this, I believe, it is necessary to present first the BJP's perspective of Rama Rajya.

Part — I

The BJP's Perspective of Rama Rajya

In order to explicate the BJP's view-point of Rama Rajya it is first important to trace its history to its beginnings and present at least a broad over-view of its growth.

The Bharatiya Janata Party was initially guided by the legacy of the Rashtriya Swayamstvak Sangh (RSS) as well as the Jeyapragash Narayan Movement. Under pressure from Atal Behari Vajpai, the only liberal leader of the BJP, such Gandhian concepts as Swadeshi, Socialism and Secularism were adopted on the Inaugural Session of the BJP (1980). In the first few years of its existence as a separate political party (1930 — '84) it tried to play a role of the Opposition in the mainstream politics.

After the 1984 election, however, the BJP realized that it could not take for granted RSS support. It ought to nurture and capture the 'Hindu vote' in order to come to political power. So, the Gandhian socialism and secularism were buried. Instead, the RSS goal of restoring the Hindu common culture became the BJP's pad for working for Rashtra. And the RSS code of using the name of Ram became its war-cry.

L. K. Advani was mostly responsible for making the party's relation with the RSS stronger. He defended the Hindutva plank more staunchly from 1986 onwards. The issues such as the Meenakshipuram conversions were highlighted. A stronger link was established between the RSS, the BJP and the Viswa Hindu Parishad.

It was Hedgewar birth-centenary celebrations, organised nationwide by the RSS in 1989, that laid the ground for the BJP's electoral campaign. Availing itself of this opportunity the BJP in its national executive session, in 1989 at Palamphin (Himachal Pradesh) adopted the Ayodhya Temple demand. It was no wonder that the *Ram Shila Pujan* Programme, was followed up more extensively and systematically, creating awareness in every village of 2000 or more.

The local controversy of Ayodhya was manoeuvred as an issue for a nation-wide agitation for the liberation of the *Ram Janmabhomi*. Till then Ayodhya never figured among the leading pilgrimage-centres of the country. Even in the state of Uttar Pradesh, it was Haridwar, Varanasi, Allaha-bad, Mathura and the four '*dhams*' — Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri and Gangotri — that attracted the Hindu devotees from the farthest corners of India. Ayodhya on the contrary being a local centre, used to attract pilgrims only from the neighbouring districts.

But it was in 1990, after the BJP-RSS-VHP combine made it into a national issue, that the Hindutva fervour reached its peak. The V. P. Singh Government fell not only on account of its determination to implement Mandal Commission's Report, but also because L. K. Advani could arrange to get a massive support from the people, through his *Rath Yatra* - campaign in Sep-Oct 1990. At each stop he brought up the '*mandir* issue' and appealed to people in the name of Ram.

The VHP Rally on April 4, 1991 was another landmark. In it Advani publicly proclaimed that the BJP had accepted *Ram Bhakti* as synonymous with *Rashtra Bhakti*. At the New Delhi Rally he proclaimed: "*Ram Shakti* lies in *Rashtra Shakti*". And the *sants* said that the only way to herald Rama Rajya was to vote for the BJP. And in May 1991 BJP captured power in four states of North India. The

victory of BJP in U. P. is historic because of the specific promises that it would build a new Ram Temple at the disputed site of the *Babri Masjid* at Ayodhya.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992 was itself seen by the BJP's general secretary, H. V. Seshadri as a tremendous moral booster for the Hindu psyche.² The *dharshan* question was further used to keep alive the passions it had inflamed and also to consolidate the material gains made in terms of land, buildings and establishment. Moreover a VHP-controlled body consisting of *sants* and *mahents* was set up, to oversee the construction of the *Ram Mandir*.

In the meanwhile, the BJP leadership of L. K. Advani, emphasized that his party's involvement on the issue was in the politico-ideological plane, intended to start a crusade against pseudo-secularism and minorityism. When the President's rule was imposed on the four states (U.P., M.P., H.P. and Rajasthan) it was focussed that the four chief ministers had sacrificed their thrones for the cause of Ram. It was said that the fight was between pseudo-secularism and nationalism and Lord Ram was projected as a national leader.³

In the Karnataka campaigns, L. K. Advani was trying to catch the popular Hindu imagination with his fiery socio-religious appeal in the name of Rama Rajya. In areas with a good Muslim population, Advani had a slightly different technique. He explained that "*Rama Rajya* is not Hindu Raj, but *Adarsh Raj* (utopia) where there is no hunger, illiteracy and injustice". Ram and roti symbolized, according to him, the nation's spiritual and material well-being. By attempting to combine these two (*Ram* and *roti*) he tried to

2. Cf. *Frontline*. Jan 15, 1993, p. 15.

E. bid., p. 16.

make Rama Rajya the central theme of his call for an alternative and moral society.⁴

In the national executive meeting, after demolition it was formally decided that Gandhi's concept of a Rama Rajya would be weaved into party's determination to construct the temple at Ayodhya. "Hindu Awakening, Rama Rajya, and social equality" will now be the slogans of BJP.⁵ Since then L. K. Advani has been referring to Gandhi as a model of using religion in politics. In the Bangalore meeting Advani said, quoting Gandhi: "Politics bereft of religion is absolute dirt, ever to be shunned". Tactically however, he omitted to say that what Gandhi meant was that the moral values of religion should guide people in public life.⁶ Gandhi used the term in the moral and ethical sense.

Advani further said it was Gandhi's religion, his Hinduism and his Rama obliged him to march for the rights of the weak including the rights of the minorities.⁷ Finally the pre-election statement released by him on 25, October 1993, was entitled "Onwards to Rama Rajya". It elaborated the concept of Rama Rajya as "cultural nationalism" in opposition to what it described as "pseudo-secularism". All this, therefore, establish that the BJP notion of Rama Rajya is clearly communal, exemplifying an ideology for establishment of Hindu state in India.

By linking its ideology with the notion of Rama Rajya, what the BJP wants to claim is twofold: First, its strategy of using religion into politics is actually a religious act, an exercise in favour of religion. Secondly, by using the term

4. *The Week*, April 14, 1993, p. 35.

5. *India Today*, April 30, 1993, p. 55.

6. *India Today*, July 15, 1993, p. 49.

7. *Frontline*, August 27, 1993, as referred to by Rajmohan Gandhi in *The Hindu*, 24-08-1993, p. 8.

'Rama Rajya' it wants to show to the public that its strategy is in line with Mahatma Gandhi's approach to politics as well as his usage of the concept Rama Rajya.

But whether, such a claim is true or not will be clear from (i) a specific expose of what exactly Gandhi meant by Rama Rajya which he envisioned (ii) an analysis of the implications of his understanding, and finally, a consideration of the methods he suggested to realize his vision. Hence, the three following sections will deal with the above.

Part 2

Meaning of Rama Rajya according to Gandhi

First of all it is important to bear in mind that it was in a specific context that Gandhi put forward his vision of Rama Rajya. During the Freedom Struggle, Gandhi was repeatedly challenged to define the independence he was trying to achieve thereby. It is in this context that Gandhi used to say :

"...the independence of my dream means Rama Rajya, i.e. the kingdom of God on Earth. I do not know what it will be like in heaven; I have no desire to know the distant scene. If the present is attractive enough the future cannot be very unlike."⁸

Now, any inquisitive mind will immediately raise a question : What was the type of Independence that Gandhi dreamed of? An answer to this sort of question would involve a twofold understanding : (a) what it was not, and (b) what it was.

8. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Govt. of India, Information and Broadcasting, publications Division, New Delhi (Hereafterwards this work will be referred to with the following Abbreviation "*CWMG*") Vol. 84, p. 80.

(a) *Negatively*, Gandhi's understanding of our country's independence was not to be modelled after any of the western nations.

"By political independence I do not mean an imitation of the British House of Commons or the Soviet Rule of Russia or the Fascist Rule of Italy or the Nazi Rule of Germany."⁹

By this Gandhi did not pooh-pooh their systems of government. For he immediately added: "They have systems suited to their genius"¹⁰ So also, he pleaded, "we must have a system that suits to our genius"¹¹

The Indian genius, according to Gandhi, consisted mainly of spiritual orientation to life. The modern western civilization was materialistic, mammon-centered, and even satanic in nature.¹² As against it, Gandhi held that Indian culture was deeply ethical and spiritual based on eternal values.¹³ In line with this heritage, then, Gandhi dreamed about political independence too. Accordingly therefore political independence of India meant really a re-statement of our ethico-spiritual values. It is this that Gandhi described as Rama Rajya. It only meant "sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority"¹⁴

(b) *To put it positively*, then, independence of Gandhi's dream meant regulated power of the people. That is why he called it "Swaraj" or Self-Rule. The Self-Rule

9. M. K. Gandhi, *Village Swaraj*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1962, p. 3.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* ch. 3.

13. *Ibid.*

14. M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.* in No. 9 *Supra.*

again is supposed to be governed by moral principles so much that even a young girl will feel herself safe and if the imagination of a poet is correct, animals like dogs etc, which live among human beings will have a similar feelings of safety. We shall have to arrive at various basic decisions in regard to *Swaraj* because under *Swaraj* such decisions are not subject to officials in power but are based on truth and justice. I have succinctly called this kind of *Swaraj* Rama Rajya.

Gandhi was quite aware of the fact that Muslims and others might misinterpret it. So he told them these words :

I warn my Mussalman friends against misunderstanding me in my use of the words 'Rama Rajya'. By Rama Rajya I do not mean Hindu Raj, I mean by Rama Rajya, Divine Raj, the Kingdom of God. For me Rama and Rahim are one and the same deity. I acknowledge no other God but the one God of truth and righteousness.¹⁵

Having clarified the meaning of Ram as God of truth and justice, it was so easy for him to define Rama Rajya as reign of justice, or *Dharma Rajya*.

"Whether Rama of my imagination ever lived or not on this earth, the ancient ideal of Rama Rajya is undoubtedly one of true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice without an elaborate and costly procedure. Even the dog is described by the poet to have received justice under Rama Rajya".¹⁶

15. Please see Jagparvesh Chander, *Teaching of Mahatma Gandhi*, The Indian printing works, Lahore, Sep. 1945, p. 475-476.

16. *Ibid.*

From these words it is clear that the independence of Gandhi's dream was such that there was no fear of any kind either for a human being or even for the animals.

Another feature of Swaraj was that it would promote perfect equality among its members. "Under it even the weakest must enjoy the same freedom, and same right, as the strongest."¹⁷ It was to be broad-based on the fundamental rights of all. "The Rama Rajya of my dream ensures the rights alike of prince and pauper."¹⁸

Equal justice and freedom are not to be rendered merely as a matter of right and on the basis of law. On the contrary noble qualities like truth, non-violence, love of God, honesty, etc. will play a predominant role in establishing justice and freedom. That is why Gandhi suggests the following :

By acquiring clean and healthy habits, by adhering to truth and non-violence, and by doing their work in life honestly and sincerely and with love of God, they would be promoting not only individual happiness but also the happiness of the community as a whole. Only through truth and non-violence could they establish Swaraj (or) Rama Rajya in this land.¹⁹

Further, the Rama Rajya of Gandhi's dream was to be based on love. All religions, Gandhi said, proclaim that the world is held together by the chain of love. If this chain did not bind human beings to one another, we would all be dead. We should, therefore, have such a chain to bind us if we want Swaraj or Rama Rajya. That is why Gandhi could define Rama Rajya thus :

17. *CWGMG.*, Vol. 82, p. 416.

18. *CWGMG.*, Vol. 58, p. 248.

19. *CWGMG.*, Vol. 83, p. 36.

I define Swaraj or Rama Rajya as I often do because it is a graphic description for a moral government based upon truth and non-violence in other words universal religion.²⁰

Summing up, the independence or Swaraj of Gandhi's dreams may be defined as "*dharma rajya*", meaning as integrated society ruled by morality. To put it in the words of Gandhi: "I have described it as Rama Rajya i.e. Sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority."²¹

In one word, then, Rama Rajya of Gandhi meant the type of Government of Independent India, that was to be envisioned not after any of the western models of Government, but the ideal type of Government based on moral authority that was supposed to have existed in India centuries ago or at least conceived by the Indian genius and described in the Epics.

Part 3

Implications of Gandhi's Conception of Rama Rajya

From the foregoing section, it may be hoped, a clear idea has emerged about Rama Rajya of Gandhi's dream. What is central to the ideas of Gandhi has been given above. This central idea of Gandhi may be translated in various ways and at different levels.

"It can be religiously translated as Kingdom of God on earth; politically translated, it is perfect democracy in which, inequalities based on possession and non-possession, colour race or creed or sex vanish; in it, land and state belong to the people, justice is prompt, perfect and cheap, and therefore there is freedom of

20. *CWVG.*, Vol. 33, p. 9.

21. *CWVG.*, Vol. 64, p. 192.

worship, speech and the press - all this because of the reign of the self-imposed law of moral restraint."²²

In order to translate Gandhi's dream into reality, it is important for us to comprehend the implications of it. It is important to bring them out, so as to understand its features.

3.1 No Militarism

One of the implications of Gandhi's Rama Rajya is exclusion of all defence forces from the government :

'Moral' means freedom from armed defence forces. My conception of Rama Rajya excludes replacement of the British army by a national army of occupation."²³

Gandhi gave top-most priority to exclusion of all defence forces from the Independent India. The reason is not only that it was in accordance with his over-all philosophy of non-violence, but also that it was in accordance with the moral framework of the Kingdom that he envisioned for the independent India. Where there is force, one can never be morally free. So, Gandhi insisted upon removing all forces from the government. That alone will provide all people with scope for making use of their moral freedom. Even the so-called weakest member of society must be given the moral freedom. It is only in such an atmosphere he will be enabled to exercise his/her freedom and thereby rise to moral heights too.

"A country that is governed by even its national army can never be morally free and, therefore, its so called weakest member can never rise to his moral height "²⁴

22. *CWMSG.*, Vol. 80, p. 300.

23. *CWMSG.*, Vol. 84, p. 80.

24. *Ibid.*

3.2 No Communalism

Another implication of the 'moral rule' of Gandhi's conception is that there would be no trace of communalism in the government. Gandhi always believed that the spirit within was the permanent part of human being. Based upon this, then, there would be no trace of untouchability or social inequality in Hinduism. Similarly he also said that Hindus as Muslims are coming from the same God. Therefore there would never be any quarrel among one another, on the basis of religion. If this spirit persisted, and spread throughout the length and breadth of India, then there would be no fear of communal disturbances in Noakhali or Punjab.²⁵

3.3 The Spiritual Heritage to govern

Historians testify that in ancient India people had no need to lock their doors. Even today this practice continues to exist in villages. Nobody is bothered to lock one's house. If at all some people lock their main door, the key is kept just on the door-post. And still no case of theft is reported.

This reveals according to Gandhi two things : (a) On the one hand, it shows that economic conditions of the people were so equitable that nobody bothered about the goods of others. Much less were they induced to steal from the possessions of others. (b) On the other hand, it also reveals that our tradition was characterized principally by honesty and truth. This spiritual heritage must govern our nation not only in respect of the individual houses but also of the Government House. Gandhi held that even historically thefts were not known in Rama Rajya, the rule of king Ram.

In the light of such a spiritual heritage, Gandhi said, it was a matter of shame that there was a show of the

25. *CWMG.*, Vol. 89, p. 52.

military to induce the crowd to vacate the Government House. Gandhi was also grieved to learn that some plate in the Government House was pilfered. He would be glad to find that the plate was returned to the Government House.²⁶

3.4 Leadership based on noble qualities

Another implication of Rama Rajya of Gandhi's conception is that rulers will not be elected merely through a democratic process. Rather they will have to prove their leadership through their integrity and character and their readiness to work for the people. Referring to the Parliament House of India, Gandhi once said :

"We should have to employ there men not democratically elected but men of proved integrity and character, ready to work for the people's welfare."²⁷

Closely connected with the characteristics mentioned above, there should be a selfless attitude, a spirit of non-possession or voluntary renunciation too. Referring to some illustrious rulers of the past, Gandhi says :

"I like the ideal of Rama and Janaka; they owned nothing against people. Everything including themselves belonged to the people."²⁸

These qualities of integrity, non-possession etc. would spring out spontaneously in a ruler who is really dedicated to the cause of serving the people. So the basic requirement of rulers, according to Gandhi, was that they must be totally at the service of the people : "Rama Rajya means rule of the people by people like Rama who would never wish to

26. *Ibid.*

27. *CWMSG.* Vol. 63, p. 409.

28. M. K. Gandhi, *Op. cit.*, foot no. 9 *Supra* p. 102.

rule . . . God calls Himself a servant of His servants.'²⁹
"How much more service-minded, then, our rulers should be", Gandhi asks.

3.5 Justice to be uppermost

Finally it was the question of justice that was uppermost in the mind of Mahatma Gandhi as the principal feature of the Rama Rajya.

"My ideal of Indian State is that of Rama Rajya. Rama taking his cue from a washerman's remark and in order to satisfy his subjects abandoned Sita who was dear to Rama as life itself and was very incarnation of purity. He did justice even to the dog. He lent splendour to his throne by his popular administration and proved that Rama Rajya was the acme of Swaraj. Rama did not need very imperfect modern instrument of ascertaining public opinion by counting votes. He had captivated the hearts of the people. He knew public opinion by intuition as it were. The subjects of Rama were supremely happy."³⁰

3.6 Discipline, a basic condition

Is such an ideal rule of the past ever possible? Gandhi was of the opinion that, "such Rama Rajya is possible even today". In an attempt to give concretely a historic illustration, Gandhi says, "the first Caliphs may be said to have established Rama Rajya."³¹

Further, referring to a fact of recent history in which Gandhi himself was involved, he says that it was possible to realize the rule of Rama Rajya provided that people are known for disciplined way of life.

29. *CMWG.*, Vol. 49, p. 92.

30. *CWVG.*, Vol. 25, p. 588.

31. *Ibid.*

"During the Boer War he had seen thousands of soldiers perform a noiseless march through a dense, tropical jungle in the middle of the night, in pitch darkness, for not even a match-stick was to be struck to light cigarette, lest it should betray their movements to the enemy. The whole troop-formation was like one man, in perfect silence and harmony. The need for discipline for a nation on its march towards independence was infinitely greater. Without it, Rama Rajya or the Kingdom of God on earth would remain an empty dream."³²

Part 4

How to bring about Rama Rajya

Not only did Gandhi hold his view that it was possible to realize the ideal moral rule here on earth, but also thought out some concrete ways and means of establishing the Kingdom of God. We may categorize them all into four main groups: (i) Spiritual (ii) Political (iii) Economic and (iv) Social.

4.1 The Spiritual Measures

The first and foremost step is to remove fear in us and develop faith in God:

I want to see Rama Rajya established but how it is to be brought about? It will be possible only if we become brave, give up fear and have faith in God.³³

Celebration of festivals and worship must actually be conducive to re-new our faith in God and re-direct us from the path of evil into the path of good. Gandhi deplored the lack of faith in the minds of modern people in India.

32. *CWMG.*, Vol. 85, p, 143.

33. *CWMG.*, Vol. 88, p. 267.

In the great battle between Rama and Ravana, Rama symbolized the forces of God and Ravana the forces of evil. Rama conquered Ravana and this victory established Rama Rajya in India.³⁴

But Alas! Today there is no Rama Rajya in India. We celebrate Diwali. Only those who have Rama within can celebrate this victory. God alone can illumine our souls.³⁵

4.2 The Political Measures

Faith in God and a continuous renewal of it through celebration of festivals is not enough. People must be conscientised about their capacity to regulate and control the authority of the rulers.

Real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words Swaraj is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.³⁶

One of the basic assumptions of Gandhi was that a political system becomes authoritarian only because people give a voluntary submission to it. So people must be taught that power is never taken from them but it is always given by them. It is possible for the rulers to sustain their powers because people are disunited and are acquiesced with the power.

Referring to the British rule in India, Gandhi said already in 1909 :

34. *CWVG.*, Vol. 90, p. 18.

35. *Ibid.*

36. M. K. Gandhi, *op. cit.* in foot no. 9 *Supra.*

The English have not taken India; we have given it to them : They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them... And we keep the English in India for our base selfish interest. We further strengthen their hold by quarreling amongst ourselves.³⁷

So, Gandhi maintained that when people are conscious of their role, and if they are motivated to be active enough not to obey unjust laws, they can easily overthrow the tyranny of the authoritarian rule.

If man will only realize that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him This is the key to self-rule or home rule.³⁸

That is why, Gandhi was keen on making people informed and conscious. He made them articulate and action-oriented. He prepared them to be ready for non-violent systematic protests.

We are all puppets in their (British) hands. But it would be wrong and foolish to blame that authority. That authority does not compel us to be puppets. We voluntarily run into their camp. It is therefore open to any and everyone of us to refuse to play the British game.³⁹

So, if Gandhi introduced the method of non-cooperation it was indeed as a powerful weapon of the masses as against their sleepy indifference. Thereby Gandhi enabled them to rid themselves of the feeling of helplessness. He made them feel independent of all government-control or

37. M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1938, p. 40.

38. *ibid.*, p. 81.

39. M. K. Gandhi, *Non-violence in Peace and War*, Vol II, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1949, p. 148.

supervision. People must be taught to change from the state of passive submission to a conscious rejection of the rule of the unjust. It is in this that the secret of Gandhi's Satyagraha campaigns lies.

Thus Gandhi was always keen on taking up political measures along with his spiritual means of prayer, faith in God etc. So his effort to establish Rama Rajya was not a goody-goody type of pious wish involving only prayer. Rather it involved a concrete mode of action as well.

4.3 The Economic Measures

Above all, we must teach the masses to plunge into concrete course of constructive programmes for uplifting themselves. Gandhi zealously held the view that we have to teach the villagers how to economize time, health and money. He felt so sorry that our village-folk do not get fresh air though they are surrounded by fresh air. They don't get fresh food though they are surrounded by the freshest food. Gandhi was talking like a missionary in matters of food for the villagers.

It was not enough for the villagers to confine their work only to agriculture. In addition to it, Gandhi suggested the use of village industries. At that time he was firmly convinced of the use of spinning wheel as the most effective weapon to fight against economic injustices.

I am more firmly convinced that this (economic uplift of villages) lies in the spinning wheel. If we of the middle class who are educated, and who look upon ourselves as belonging to the higher castes give a thought to the condition of the poorer classes, nothing else but the spinning wheel will be plied mainly by women as it is primarily they who have time to spare. Hence I have been crying from the house tops at various places, day and night, that it is through them that we would prevent crores of rupees

from being drained out of the country, and secure true Swaraj-Rama Rajya.⁴⁰

As against the possible denigration of village industries by the city-dwellers, Gandhi reminds them of their obligation to the poor people in villages :

We, town-dwellers have believed that India is to be found in its towns; and the villages were created to minister to our needs. We have hardly ever paused to inquire if those poor-folk get sufficient to eat and clothe themselves with and whether they have roof to shelter themselves from sun and rain.⁴¹

Replacing the soul-less competition that was characteristic of the modern western economy, Gandhi suggested the principle of community-service according to which everybody will be a toiler with ample leisure. Khadi industry is best suited for making people toilers and yet providing them with ample leisure :

But in order to attain Rama Rajya all must help. In order to achieve this Khadi alone is the universal and constructive instrument.⁴²

No doubt, Gandhi gave importance to cottage crafts and intensive small scale farming, cooperatives through which all economic equality would be established.

4.4 The Social Measures

Socially constructive programmes will touch the respectful treatment of women on the one hand and the un-touchables on the other.

40. *CWVG.* Vol. 35, p. 419.

41. M. K. Gandhi, *Op. cit.*, foot no. 9 *Supra.*

42. *CWVG.* Vol. 43, p. 112.

There will be the same respect for women as vouchsafed to men Gandhi said. So also chastity and purity of men and women will be jealously guarded where every woman except one's wife will be treated by men of all religions, as mother, sister, daughter according to her age.

Moreover, Gandhi envisioned a picture of castless and classless society, in which there are no vertical division but only horizontal; no high no low; all service has equal status and carries wages; those who have more use their advantage not for themselves, but as a trustee to serve others who have less.⁴³ He clearly and staunchly worked for establishment of a society where there will be no untouchability and where there will be equal respect for all faiths. All will be proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread-labourers.

Conclusion

It is clear that Gandhi's vision of Rama Rajya is nothing but the positive picture of Swaraj. While his freedom-struggle was meant to give the nation "*liberation from*" the foreign rule, his vision of Rama Rajya provided people with a clear picture of what their "*liberation for*" is. The vision of his Swaraj was establishment of a self-rule based on morality and the noble principles of Truth and Non-violence.

Gandhi did agree that his dream of Rama Rajya was an imaginary ideal. But Gandhi argued that just because the vision of Rama Rajya was an ideal, it did not mean that it was irrelevant. Rather, like Euclid's point, it sets us the direction in which we will have to move. It remains a parameter which corrects the real constantly.

Further Gandhi insisted upon the validity of his vision on the ground that something approximating to this ideal

43. M. K. Gandhi, *Op. cit.*, in foot note No. 9 *Supra*, pp. 9-10.

did exist in our history. It is the ideal rule as it was imagined to have happened in Sri Rama's kingdom.

This never meant that Gandhi gave a communalistic understanding to his vision. He never wanted a revival of the *Rajya* with "Sri Ram" as the State-god or of resurgence of Rama-cult as the State-religion. Gandhi made it clear on many occasions :

"Let no one commit the mistake of thinking that Rama Rajya means a rule of the Hindus. My Rama is another name for *Khudai* or God. I want *Khuda* Raj which is the same thing as the Kingdom of God on Earth. The establishment of such a Rajya would not only mean welfare of the whole of the Indian people but the whole world.⁴⁴

Gandhi was also pointing out a counterpart of his Rama Rajya from other cultures. Thus for instance, the rule of the first four Caliphs was somewhat comparable to it Gandhi said. If one wanted to find a Christian counterpart it is exactly the same as "the Kingdom of God on earth", proclaimed by Jesus Christ. What the Acts 4:32 depicts is actually what Gandhi was talking about.

Once Gandhi clearly said :

No matter in how many ways Swaraj may have been defined, no matter how many interpretations I myself may have given it, to me its only meaning which is eternally valid is Rama Rajya.⁴⁵

If the word Rama Rajya offends anyone, [then I shall call it 'Dharmarajya'. The sense of the word Rama Rajya is this that under such a rule the poor will be fully protected, everything will be done with justice

44. Foot No. 1 *Supra*.

45. Foot No. 42, *Supra*.

and the voice of the people will always be projected ⁴⁶

Why, then, should Gandhi use the term Rama Rajya instead of a common term like "Kingdom of God"? Gandhi gave the following reason.

Rama Rajya is a convenient and expressive phrase, the meaning of which no alternative can so fully express to millions. When I visit the Frontier Province or address predominantly Muslim audiences, I would express my meaning to them by calling it Khudai Raj, while to Christian audience I would describe it as the Kingdom of God on earth. Any other mode would for me be self-suppression and hypocrisy.⁴⁷

In fine, then, it is quite clear that the BJP's use and understanding of the term 'Rama Rajya' is quite different from that of Gandhi's.

Despite the differences between the two perspectives, if the BJP tries to connect its stand-point with that of Gandhi's it only betrays a mal-intention either to discredit the universal standpoint of Gandhi or to give somehow credibility for its communal standpoint. In either case it is certainly wrong and unjust. It only means hijacking of Gandhi's concept.

While the BJP's concept of Rama Rajya is communalistic, Gandhi's is spiritualistic and universal. While the BJP's effort is politicization of the spiritual, what Gandhi tried was really the spiritualization of politics, establishment of God's rule on earth. Though this looks little idealistic, yet one should remember that Gandhi's dream of Rama Rajya was indeed realizable, if only we were ready to take up the different measures seriously and try to execute them consciously.

Dr. A. Pushparajan

46. *Ibid.*

47. *CWMSG.*, Vol. 85, p. 135.