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Introduction Mohammad Charmed Gandhi has attained an Iconic status In the world and In history Is indisputable. About a hundred volumes of his collected works have been published by the Government of India, more than three thousand five hundred books have been written on Gandhi, and his symbols and words continue to inspire and encourage. As we celebrate a hundred years of his acknowledged magnum opus Hind Swarm, It Is time to reflect on the Importance of both the text and the context of this renowned work.

Hind Swarm] is a seminal and a foundational work, and it is widely seen as the bible f non-violent revolutions as well as providing the blue print of all kinds of revolutions. Though Gandhi wrote extensively, Hind Swarm was his earliest text, In which he questioned the accepted myths and the truths of his times. The text Is not only a tract on political methodology, philosophy or political movements; it is a statement of faith. Therefore, its relevance goes much beyond the time frame in which it was written. Gandhi wrote this short tract in 1909 originally in Guajarati on a return voyage from London to South Africa. Reflections on Hind Swarm He completed the work In short period of ten days, and hen his right hand was tired he wrote with his left hand. It appears that the ideas in the book were written in a state of frenzy, and that these ideas formulated faster than his words. The text consists of twenty short chapters, cast In the form of a dialogue between Gandhi who Is called the ' editor' and his Interlocutor known as the " reader. " The style Is similar to the Socrates dialogue in Plat's Republic and the Pinheads. Writing 275 pages, Gandhi struck down his original words only ten times.

Such was the vision and passion with which he wrote this text. Despite the fact that the work is shot through with employ philosophical Ideals, arguments, and values, doctrines of action, and notions of self rule or swarm, Hind Swarm is an easy book to read, because it contains neither theories, nor Jargon's. In fact, Gandhi thought of Hind Swarm as a book that could be "put into the hands off child. Hind Swarm was serialized In two installments In the weekly published by Gandhi in South Africa. In January 1910, it was published as a booklet in Guajarati.

In March 1910, the British Government proscribed it along with other publications on the plea that these writings contained seditious literature. Gandhi then translated the booklet into English. In fact this is the only text which he Text and Context of Hind Swarm 10 himself translated. In this paper I wish to reflect both on the issue of the context as well as the text of HAS. What is a Classic and How do we Read it? Hind Swarm can rightly be regarded as a classic; a unique testimony of a man who tried to translate his vision for human freedom into mass action.

But then the question arises, what is a classic and what is its value? There are roughly two sorts of answers to this question. Hegel held that classics embody the spirit of their age. On he other hand, Question Skinner argues that a classic is a work that goes against the spirit of its age. Howsoever we define a classic, we know a classic when we see one, for the richness of its ideas, the lucidity of its prose, and the continuing relevance of its ideas. We read classics for pure intellectual satisfaction, and because we are seekers of knowledge.

But more importantly, we read classics because we know that all good political thinking has to have knowledge of the past. We read classics to understand where we come from, how we have reached where we are at the present, and what were the roads oaken and the roads not taken. In sum, classics not only tell us how we should live, but also illumine our path with their wisdom, and thereby provide solutions for our current predicament. For our knowledge of the past helps us to come to terms with ourselves. As the philosopher Santayana was to comment insightfully, “ those who condemn history are bound to repeat it”.

The past then is not another country; it is part of the present. For instance 11 Reflections on Hind Swarm the ‘ present’ of Indian society is the product of our past, I. E. , colonialism. Our language, our ideas our caballeros, our texts and our critical thinking have been constituted by colonialism. But we also know that it is impossible to reconstruct the past because we approach history from the vantage point of the present, what is called a interpretation of the past is determined by our current concerns.

For instance how many of us go back to the nineteenth century because we grapple with problems of imperialism, chastises, gender imbalances or poverty? We read history and classics from the point of view of our current concerns, worries, preoccupations, and our desire to understand ourselves. Above all we read classics to save ourselves from getting lost. This does not mean that we do not understand history as it was, but to be conscious that we often understand the past from the vantage point of the present.

Of course there are different ways of understanding history through narratives, travelogues, events, novels and studies of processes. Political theorists, for example, understand the history of ideas through classics, not only because they condense the spirit of their age, but because they raise normative and ethical questions that remain relevant for us till today.

Classics like Hind Swarm not only tell us of the ethical and normative issues that marked that time, not only do they Text and Context of Hind Swarm 12 address the crisis of their age, they ask deep questions about the spirit of those times.

Now, the eminent historian Question Skinner is of the view that classics are time bound, and that we should read them keeping in mind that they address specific historical needs. Skinner has been associated with a group of philosophers who have had a shared link with Cambridge and are known as the Cambridge school. They chose not to emphasis a particular text, but to focus on he intellectual political and ideological contexts within which these texts were written, and the languages that both shaped the context of their writing, as well as those that were shaped by these contexts.

On the other hand, the textual approach adopted by the political theorist Trance Ball is concerned with reading a theory out of the text, and reconstructing it for our purpose. The autonomy of the text, holds Ball, is the necessary key to its meaning. The idea of reading a classic is to recover timeless elements or dateless wisdom that has universal application and continuing relevance. Broadly speaking an emphasis on the social context cancels out timelessness, and the textual approach emphasizes texts that answer questions which are There is however another way of reading a text.

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The answers given to the central questions may be time bound-what is Justice, what is freedom, what is the 13 Reflections on Hind Swarm nature of imperialism? But the questions are relevant and transactional, therefore, classics are relevant. Secondly classics help us to provide a critique of our present understanding, because they question, probe and challenge existing systems of power, legitimacy, and ways of being. That is why leading political philosophers have been persecuted, even executed for their ideas like Socrates and Gandhi. Their ideas were threats to existing ways of understanding the world.

Philosophers like Rousseau and Voltaire did not create the revolution. But they expressed the discontent and the tensions underlying society. They understood that disheveled classes were making claims on society that could not be fulfilled unless society was changed. When we come to Hind Swarm, we realize that it is a classic. Not only a saga of hope and loss; Hind Swarm embodies a struggle over competing ideas. This struggle over ideas acts as a whetstone to sharpen our understanding, helps us raise new questions, and also aids us in drafting out the answers.

Like all political philosophy, Hind Swarm is public spirited for three reasons: one, it critiques social and political arrangements, secondly it searches for what is right and the good, and, thirdly it makes us aware of the fact that individual wellbeing is dependent on social wellbeing. Simply put Hind Swarm gives us an alternative way of understanding how and why we think of ourselves and of society in a particular way. Like other classics Hind Swarm condenses the spirit of its mime both through documentation Text and Context of Hind Swarm 14 and critique.

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At the same time, it reaches beyond its age, stimulates minds of later generations, and provokes them to ask questions. What was Gandhi trying to do in Hind Swarm? Having given a brief theoretical background to what constitutes the text and the context of Hind Swarm this paper seeks to find answers to the following questions that are in the main inspired by Skinner.

A) What was Gandhi doing in writing a text in relation question will define the ideological context of Hind Swarm. HAS was a text written in response to Eileen, militant, revolutionary methods adopted by a group of Indian nationalists.

Gandhi advocated non-violent methods rooted in the ethical-moral advocacy of politics. The political philosophy of Robbing, Raja Ramona Roy, Vaccinated, Ravishment ?? tag?? re and other thinkers of the time had addressed issues such as colonial subjugation, nature of civilization, and the perennial search of human beings to live nurtured and fulfilled lives. Hind Swarm as a reappraisal of theories of the nature of Indian civilization and as an ethical-moral response to political issues provided an alternative way to thinking about ileitis compared to existing theories and philosophies. 5

Reflections on Hind Swarm B) Why was it written and for whose benefit?

Gandhi was apprehensive that an emerging new leadership of the anti-imperialist movement would legitimate the use of violence. This had become painfully obvious during the partition of Bengal in 1905 and the communal riots that followed. Seeking to counter the cult of violence present in some sections of the nationalist movements as well as in the practices of the colonial power, Hind Swarm teaches the gospel of love in place of that of hate, and replaces violence with self-sacrifice. It pits as Gandhi said, “ the

soul force against brute force. (p. 15) Hind Swarn embodied Sandhog's blueprint of an ideal society and the state. And towards this end he in Hind Swarn addressed his own countrymen as well as the British colonial power.

C) What was its practical context? The British colonial government had treated rigid Cathartics injunctions and traditions of Indians, at par with British law, and Judged them on grounds of rationality. The British also used the "civilization" debate, to legitimate their rule in India. It was in this precise context that Gandhi resolved to construct the rich cultural heritage and the traditions of his country.

This he did in Hind Swarn. His ultimate objective was to emancipate his people both from (a) obsolete traditions and (b) unquestioning imitation of modern civilization. The linguistic vocabulary of that period defined his ideology in Hind Swarn as Swarn. Contemporaries such as Robbing, Talk and ?? tag?? re. Hind Swarn permeated this ideology with a theory of Text and Context of Hind Swarn 16 political action. Swarn thus acquired a unique meaning in Sandhog's philosophy. The Objective of Hind Swarn Let us now come to the crux of the argument; that s the relevance of the classic.

Classics like Hind Swarn can be understood in terms of its context as well as in terms of the perennial relevance of its arguments and insights. The core ingredients of Hind Swarn are constituted by deep philosophical reflections on Swarn. Swarn is an Panasonic word found in the Received where 'Saw' is self and 'raja' means to be able to shine on its own. In other words the concept stands for mastery over oneself through control of one's senses or 'indris'. In short, Swarn denotes the internal governance of oneself, or more precisely of one's being.

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The concept minimizes the reader on how to humanism and govern oneself before humiliating and governing the society. Gandhi argues in this text that the self governing society is best suited for liberated individuals who master coelenterates. If needs match possessions and there is no greed, there will be no need for a police state. Some of the main arguments of the text of Hind Swarm are as follows: A) Political life has the potential of becoming the highest form of active life, if it is practiced within the framework of updated Dharma, making it suitable for modern times. 7 Reflections on Hind Swarm B) Civilization can help or hinder progress and a nation's rejuvenation will depend on its ethical orientation. C) Swarm is rule of pray (subjects) biz. Self-rule within appropriate political community of a nation state. Gandhi sought to resolve Hindu-Muslim hostilities on this basis. D) Self government requires transformation of the self, which includes not only the refusal to use violence and coercion but also adopting virtues like temperance, justice, charity, truthfulness, courage, fearlessness and freedom from greed, which would reinforce political ethics.

E) Gandhi differentiates between religion as formal organization and religion as ethics and spirituality, which these arguments Gandhi gives reasons to support tolerance which later culminated into Sharma's Samovar as a state of human consciousness. F) A modern state without Swarm will replace British Raja with Indian Raja. In Hind Swarm Gandhi refers metaphorically to all modern states as tiger. He wrote, " you want the tiger's nature, but not the tiger; that is to say, you would make India English.

And when it becomes English, it will be called not Hindustan but Englishman. " (p. 26) His argument is that all tigers seek prey and there is no difference

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between the white tiger and the brown tiger in the absence of Swarm. Text and Context of Hind Swarm 18 G) Lasting lesson of Hind Swarm is non-violence where Gandhi relates Non-violence to the debate on ends and means and points out a) that violence destroys life, b) violence comes from intention to harm and violence is better than cowardice.

He discusses the relative moral superiority of Non-violence in terms of Love, Truth, Compassion, Suffering, Justice and triumph of soul force over brute force. Soul exercises these naturally if mind can control passion. Therefore, the success of Nonviolence upends on the state of soul and mind. H) This also requires an appropriate system of education and technology. Gandhi pointed out that fascination of India for modern western civilization arises from uncritical attitude of Indians towards modern education and machinery. (Later in 1921 and 1928 he modified his opinions on these issues).) Science, Technology and machinery that meet the needs of Indian masses is not condemned by Gandhi but science, technology and machine which reward the skilled and the powerful and mineralizes the poor and the weak is what he discards. He wanted appropriate technology ND machines which improved material welfare for all, not only the rich and educated. Hence the debate was on the kind of technology, science and machines that were required for human survival. He accordingly supported technology if it is linked to human good.

Though an ascetic himself, he does not glorify poverty, instead he wanted well clothed, well-groomed, well read people 19 Reflections on Hind Swarm living decent lives and if science can help us to achieve this, it is to be welcomed. Between the local and universal. One cannot enjoy the comfort of <https://assignbuster.com/reading-gandhi-delhi-university-assignment/>

air conditioned rooms and support agitation against the Ether dam and become a silent spectator to the destruction of eco-systems and fauna and flora. Secondly, for Gandhi human being is not only body but also a spirit and the two have to be harmonicas.

However, this does not at the same time mean that the body is negated or denied. Gandhi also emphasized that unbridled individualism will lead to consumerist culture where the greed will replace need. Sandhog's talisman is his ultimate agenda because when in doubt, Gandhi advises that one must recall the poorest and the weakest man one knows and ask oneself, if the action is going to be good for him and if it would restore dignity to the hungry and spiritually starving man. To conclude I will leave you with few ideas to reflect upon.

The text of Hind Swarm is constituted both by colonialism as well as by the practices of the nationalists. In deriving a response to the current debates, Gandhi engaged in philosophical reflection on not only political choices but also the morality of politics, the end of political practices, the good life and how it can be achieved and the development of human beings as moral beings. Text and Context of Hind Swarm 20 In writing Hind Swarm he drew upon the notions and the concepts used by his contemporaries and gave them a new meaning, mainly by making these the source of political action.