
GANDHIJI'S VIEWS ON ECONOMIC ISSUES

P. Bharathi Devi

Asso. Prof. of Economics, JKC College, Guntur, AP
Email: pallekondabharathidevi@gmail.com

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Abstract: Mahatma Gandhi never created a body of literature known by the name 'Gandhian Economics'. He neither claimed to be economist nor was trained on Economics. Nevertheless, he expressed his views on economics at various points of time in his life. Students of Gandhian thoughts and writings collated his reflections on Economics and created a body of literature known as Gandhian Economics.

Thomas Weber says that Gandhi was deeply influenced by Ruskin book 'Unto The Last' as that would not be out of place to say that Ruskin was the father of Gandhian Economic thought Gandhi summarized the teachings of 'Unto the Last' under three basic truths. 1.-the good of the individual is contained in the good of all (Sarvodaya). 2. -Each person has the right to earn livelihood from his work and there is dignity of labour, meaning that there is nothing called high and low labour (Bread labour) 3. -the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicrafts is to life worth living (village industries and Swadeshi).

Gandhi claimed that 'economics never militates against the highest ethical standard just as all true ethics must also be good economics. True economics stands for social justice, it promotes and good of all including the weakest and as indispensable for decent life. However, the entire structure of economic thinking which is based on the perception of constant development of the goods which satisfy unlimited demands. The second has to do with the idea of focusing on the well- being of the poorest and weakest member of the society. This was an essential part of Gandhiji's moral view of the World.

Gandhiji views on economic were simple and straight forward which would make India economically self- sufficient, manufacturing and satisfying its own needs in domestic market, home grown ways. Gandhiji's economic thought have great impact on Indian economy. In the age of globalization, Indian society is facing many socio-economic problems on account of large scale industries and mechanization. Economic ideas of Gandhi can be discussed in the following headings.

Introduction: 2nd October 2019 was a great day for India, as the country celebrated 150th birth anniversary of the Father of Nation Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi. Not only that, but the world celebrates the auspicious day as international day for non-violence to pay respect and acceptance to the true spirit of non-violence promoted by Gandhiji thought his life.

Mahatma Gandhi never created a body of literature known by the name 'Gandhian Economics'. He neither claimed to be economist nor was trained on Economics. He was not a voracious reader of economics. Nevertheless, he expressed his views on economics at various points of time in his life. His reflections on Economics found expression in his writings and thoughts. Students of Gandhian thoughts and writings collated his reflections on Economics and created a body of literature known as Gandhian Economics. Thomas Weber says that Gandhi was deeply influenced by Ruskin book 'Unto The Last' as that would not be out of place to say that Ruskin was the father of Gandhian Economic thought Gandhi summarized the teachings of 'Unto the Last' under three basic truths.

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Economic thought of Gandhi; Gandhiji views on economic were simple and straight forward which would make India economically self- sufficient, manufacturing and satisfying its own needs in domestic market, home grown ways. Gandhiji's economic thought have great impact on Indian economy. He emphasized on cottage and small scale industries which have significant importance for the development of socio-economic conditions of the common people. In the age of globalization, Indian society is facing many socio-economic problems on account of large scale industries and mechanization.

Economic ideas of Gandhi can be discussed in the following headings;

1. Economic Laws: According to Gandhi, economic laws which aim at material progress as well as social harmony and moral advancement, should be formulated according to the laws of nature. There is no conflict between the laws of nature of and laws of economics. The laws of nature are universal and the laws of economics, which deal with practical problems, are not universal. The economic laws are determined by the climate, geological and temperamental conditions of that country. Hence they vary with the conditions of the nations.

The Charkha the honour of being able to solve the problem of economic distress in a most natural, simple inexpensive and business-like manner. The Charkha, therefore is not only not useless, but it is useful and indispensable article for every home. It is the symbol of the Nations' prosperity and therefore, freedom. It is a symbol not only of commercial war but of commercial peace. It bears not a message of ill-will towards the nation of the earth, but of good will and self-help. It will not need the protection of a navy threatening a world, peace and exploiting its resources, but it needs the religious determination of million to spin their yarn in their homes as to-day they cook there for in their homes. The Charkha holds within it a philosophy of life. It is a living symbol of Ahimsa. Its goal is to create a non-violent society completely free from all forms of exploitation.

2. Non-Violent Economy: Gandhi advocated non-violence and hence his economics may be called economics of non-violence. He believed that violence in any form breeds greater violence. The solution to Indian basic problems lies in the practice of non-violence. Gandhiji opposed capitalism as it resulted in exploitation of human labour. He belied that nature produced enough for the satisfaction of the people's wants and there would be no pauperism and starvation if everybody took only that much that was sufficient to him.

3. Decentralisation - Cottage industries: Gandhi was not in favour of large scale industrialization, as it was responsible for many socio-economic evils. He believed that large scale use of machinery led to drudgery and monotony. He wants infavour of decentralized economy. In such economy exploitation of labour would be nil. He suggested, the use of labour intensive techniques because India has more human power than capital. He suggested decentralization of industries, for the survival of democracy and for the establishment of a non-violent state. Cottage and village industries help increasing employment, commodities can be produced cheaply as there is no need for separate establishment as they require low capital, machinery etc., The industries in rural areas increase the income of the villages and satisfy their basic requirements. They not only remove poverty and unemployment, but also make them self- sufficient economic units.

4. Khadi Industry: Gandhi encouraged the whole country to use khadi it was the 'symbol of Unity of Indian humanity of its economic freedom and equality'. Khadi movement began after Gandhiji's return from South Africa. He believed that Khadi industry would save millions of people from starvation and supplement the earnings of poor people. He advocated the use of Charka due to its advantages. It requires a small amount of capital land simple to operation, the source of steady income, it does not depend upon monsoon, solves the problem of unemployment. It was the symbol of non-violence. His

slogan was 'Swaraj through Spinning'. His Khadi Scheme included; 1-compulsory spinning in all primary and secondary schools, 2.-cultivation of cotton in areas where it was not grown, 3. - all employees should be required to pass a test in spinning

5. Use of Machines: Gandhi described machinery as 'great sin'. He believed that the modern technology has responsible for human frustration, violence and war. It was also responsible for the multiplication of material wants. The use of machines created a class of wealthy people and led to unequal distribution of wealth. He was not against machinery. But he was against all destructive machinery. He believed that machinery were harmful when the same thing could be done easily by millions of hands. Villagers live a lifeless life. Their life is process of slow starvation. They are burdened with debts. Mechanisation is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work as in the case in India.

Gandhiji's ideas on machinery are still relevant. In spite of many planning, machine using and power driven economic development, unemployment is still there and is still growing. In his opinion the spinning wheel itself is a machine a little tooth pick is a machinery. Gandhi objected to the craze for what they call labour saving machinery. Today machinery merely helps a few ride on the back of the millions.

6. Regeneration of villages or village Sarvodaya: Gandhiji evolved the ideal of village Sarvodaya. Speaking about the old village economy production was simultaneous with consumption and distribution and the vicious circle of money economy was absent. Production was for immediate use and not for distant markets. The whole structure of society was founded on non-violence. Gandhiji wanted the revival of ancient village communities with prosperous agriculture, decentralized industries and small scale cooperative organisations. He also wanted that there should be participation of people at all level.

For ideal village he suggested to have dharmasala and dispensary, self-sufficient in food and clothes, clean roads and lanes, must have worship place, safe drinking water, play-ground, cattle sheds, cooperative based rural activities rural administration through panchayats, panchayats have judicial, legislative and executive power, no caste system etc.,

7. The Trusteeship Doctrine: Gandhi wanted to avoid a violent and bloody revolution by gearing a permanent stability of economic equality. He wanted the capitalists to be trustees and he enunciated the doctrine of trusteeship. All social property is meant for all people- rich or poor capitalists being trustees would take care of not only themselves but also of others. The workers would treat the capitalists as their benefactors and would keep faith in them. In this way there would be mutual trust and confidence with the help of which remarkable ideal economic equality could be achieved.

8. Law of Bread Labour: The law of Bread Labour was proposed by T.M.Bondaref and popularised by Ruskin and Tolstoy. It emphasizes that man must earn his bread by his own labour. To Gandhiji, the Law of Bread labour related to agriculture alone. But as everybody was not a cultivator he could earn his bread by doing some other work. He strongly believed that without physical labour no one was entitled to get his food. He advised the rich also to do bodily labour for the bread.

9. Food problem: Gandhi had seen worst famine of his life during 1943-44, when Bengal suffered heavily owing to the country-wide shortage of food. Gandhiji thought that the scarcity of food had artificially created. But later he came to a conclusion that shortage of food was not artificial. He suggested some measures for the problem of food shortage, 1-the individuals should curtail their requirements of food to the minimum, substituting with vegetables, milk, fruits etc., 2.-flower garden should be utilized for cultivation purpose, 3.-Black marketing should be stopped, 4.-Deep wells should be sunk by the government to provide irrigated facilities, 5. exports of oil seeds, oil seeds, cakes etc., should be stopped because it creates artificial scarcity.

10. Population: the most important problem which attracted the attention of Gandhi was the rapid growth of population. He opposed the use of contraceptives as its use in India would make the middleclass male population impeccable through abuse of the creative functions. He was in favour of birth control though through self- control or brahmacharya and not through the use of artificial methods. He considered self-control as the 'in fallible sovereign remedy.

11. Prohibition: According to him, the use of coffee, tea, tobacco and alcohol was determined to the mental, physical and moral development of an individual. In his opinion, the use of liquor was a disease rather than a vice. He would have preferred to be reduced to a state of pauperism than have thousands of drunkards in one midst. He did not agree with those who contended that prohibition, the revenue of the government will fall and it would not be able to incur expenditure on nation-building activities like education. He said if the evil was removed, other sources of revenue could be developed without much difficulty.

12. Labour Welfare: Mahatma Gandhi extended his right for economic equality. He saw the workers were subjected to gross injustice and the treatment meted out them was below dignity. To him the employment of children was a national detraction. He also demand He also demand safety measures inside factories. He emphasized the welfare of the workers, his dignity and proper wages. In order to improve the conditions of workers, he laid claims on minimum wages, so that a family of 4-67 members might live a human life. He said workers might be guaranteed to him- clean house, clean body, clean mind and a clean soul. He always suggested a hormonal relation between labour and capital.

13. Poverty: Gandhiji believed that business without ethical considerations was fundamentally evil. This led to discrimination, oppression and exploitation. He also held that there is enough in this world to feed and clothe all. However, there is poverty and deprivation because one group of people thrives on the labour put in by others. Gandhi strongly believed in the ethics of hard work and that one is entitled to take from the system only as much as he is capable of producing this was the only way to fight poverty and disarm the world of all its economic woes.

Gandhi also strongly believed that laziness and lack of work can cause physical and spiritual development among the populace. He worked hard for a resurrection of the village modes of production.

The most unique feature of Gandhi's economic model was he wanted to turn the entire flow of profits from the packets of the big industrialists to the workers. The consumers, he believed, not only be concerned with acquiring high quality, inexpensive products, but also consider which sections of society are profited by his investment. Foreign clothes may be better and cheaper than the home-spun khadi, but the relentless use of the imported fabric would leads to unemployment of thousands of villagers who have traditionally earned a living by spinning and weaving home-made clothes. The same logic extends to agro-based products as well.

Gandhi suggested hand spinning as the only ready means of dining away penury and making famine of work and wealth impossible. The spinning mill itself is a piece of valuable machinery. According to Gandhi, the Indian economic conditions are different from economics of England, German. They are determined by climatic, geological and temperamental conditions. Free trade for India has proved her curse and held in bondage. Starvation and idleness are the normal conditions of life for thousands of people.

14. Unemployment: Gandhi believed that in one sense, the problem of unemployment in our country is no difficult in other countries. The mode of life is a greater factor. Our own negligence and ignorance are largely responsible for them. We do not know the dignity of labour as such. That wrong notion must go. There is enough employment in India for all who will work with their hands and feet honestly. Khaddar the poor from the bonds of the rich and creates a moral and spiritual bond between the classes and the masses. It is becoming the centre of other village industries. Khaddar brings a ray of hope to

the widow's broken-up home. Khaddar offers honourable employment and utilizes the idle hours of the nation. Khaddar is a better attempt to revise and reverse the process and establish better relationship between the cities and the villages.

15. Simplicity: Gandhiji was against the multiplication of human wants. In order to lead a simple life immorality, untruth and political gain should not be included. To Gandhi happiness lay in the curtailment of wants, and not in their multiplications. As he observed- the less you possess, the less you want, the better you are, better not for the enjoyment of this life but for the enjoyment of personal services to one's fellow beings, service to which you dedicate yourself, body, soul and mind.

16. Exchange Economy: Gandhian idea on exchange economy is based on the Swadeshi spirit. Every Indian village should be a self-supporting as self-contained unit exchanging only necessary commodities with other villages where they are not locally producible. The guiding principle that he laid down irrespective of all foreign goods was that those things.

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