
GANDHIAN VIEWS ON PRODUCTIVE TECHNIQUES AND TRADE

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Received: Sep. 2019 Accepted: Oct. 2019 Published: Nov. 2019

Abstract: The important principle of Gandhian economic thought is small scale and locally oriented production, using local resources and meeting local needs, so that employment opportunities are made available everywhere, promoting the ideal of Sarvodaya, the welfare of all, in contrast with the welfare of a few. This goes with a technology which is labour-using rather than labour-saving. Gandhian views on exchange and trades are also significant in promoting interests of domestic producers particularly in protecting the small scale industries. Gandhian economy increases employment opportunities; it should not be labour displacing. Gandhi had no absolute opposition to machinery; he welcomed it where it avoids drudgery and reduces tedium. He used to cite the example of Singer sewing machine as an instance of desirable technology. He also emphasised dignity of labour, and criticised the society's contemptuous attitude to manual labour. He insisted on everybody doing some 'bread labour'. It would be wrong to presume that Gandhi propounded his theory only to suit Indian conditions. The main objective of this paper is to analyse Gandhian views on productive techniques, exchange and trade.

Keywords: Techniques of Production, Exchange, Trade, Decentralisation, Indigenous.

1. Introduction: The concept of productive techniques occupies paramount importance in Gandhian scheme of rebuilding India from below upwards. Gandhiji was totally against the centralisation of power for obvious reasons. Gandhiji was of the considered view that 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. Over and above, the more the centralisation the less will be people's participation and the less of democracy. Gandhiji stated that centralisation cannot be sustained without adequate force. Gandhiji stood for the decentralisation of both political and economic power which he believed is possible only by beginning from bottom upwards and not vice-versa. Gandhiji's vision of rebuilding free India was a corollary to his larger vision to end exploitation and construction of a 'Just' social order with equality prevailing in every sphere of human life. Gandhiji was in the lookout for an indigenous economy model based on agriculture.

2. Methods of Production: More and more things are produced to supply our primary needs, less and less will be the violence. The more we produce luxuries, the greater will be the violence that is generated. If you starve people and try to produce luxury articles, it will lead to violence. Production of a luxury like tobacco at the cost of a primary need like cereals, will weigh the scales towards violence. The complexion of the economic organisation will indicate generally, whether that organisation will generate violence or will bring about peace and prosperity to the people. We want to see the principles which will guide us towards the realisation of Non-violence and Truth (the moral considerations we have taken for granted in the Gandhian Economy) steadily pursued and adopted. Less of luxuries and more of primary needs would mean more chances of non-violence. If we want to infuse non-violence and truth into our society, we have got to remember these principles and organise accordingly.

There are two different methods of producing articles. We can produce them in either one of those two methods. According to the method we choose, the principles used will be different. We shall consider production first and consumption later. Naturally work does not go without a reaction on the producer and his personality. By turning on the radio one will not learn music. One has got to sit up and practice on the instruments until one's neighbour get tired. The muscles of the fingers and the nerves of the ears and eyes should be coordinated. It is this practice that creates and develops a musician and not merely

listening to a radio. Every action has its own reaction. The confectioner wants to give as little as he could and take as much as possible. This is in other words robbery. The larger the margin of profit one is able to make, the more successful one is considered as a businessman or as an industrialist. This carried to the logical extreme may lead to killing a man and taking away the money he has and will bring a cent per cent return. This can very well be done. This leads to gangsterism as a profession. This is the mentality that is developed by the confectioner preparing halwa. The Mithaiwala economics creates false standards and violence, while the mother's method of production develops her love and truthfulness, but entails hard work. An industrialist produces for exchange but the mother produces for home consumption. Mother's work is based on the self-sufficient economy but when we work on an exchange economy, we are apt to act like the confectioner and finally end up as gangsters.

3. Ownership and Technique of Production: Gandhi went a step further and delved deeper. According to him both the system of ownership and the technique of production were the real cause of the malady. Marx attacked the system of ownership in his humanistic zeal. But he left the technique of production altogether untouched. Gandhi focused his attention on the technique also. He suggested that large-scale technique should give way to small-scale technique. This, therefore, forms the core of his decentralisation theory.

Does this mean that Gandhi was against the application of science to the instruments of production, i.e. machinery? To this he replied, "What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such...." (Young India, 1925). Indeed he favoured the application of science towards developing the small-scale technique: "I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine", he wrote in Young India. Replying to a suggestion whether he was against all machinery he said, "My answer is emphatically no. But I am against its indiscriminate multiplication. I refuse to be dazzled by the seeming triumph of machinery. But simple tools and implements and such machinery as saves individual labour and lightens the burden of millions of cottages, I should welcome". (Young India, 1926). We see therefore, that Gandhi was not against machinery as such. His whole approach to machinery and the use of science was radically different, deeply revolutionary and humanly conscious.

A technique which tends to make man a robot robs him of his perennial urge to freedom and makes an all-out invasion on his political, economic and social liberties is not acceptable to Gandhi. "Science in so far as it consists of knowledge, must be regarded as having value, but in so far as it consists of technique, the question whether it is to be praised or blamed depends upon the use that is made of the technique. In itself it is neutral, neither good nor bad and any ultimate view that we may have about what gives value to this or that must come from some other source than science." This is what Bertrand Russell has to say about the use of scientific technique. According to Gandhi, the scientific technique, therefore, must be informed by a deep awareness of values which it is out to create. In other words, the advancement of technique and perfection must accord with the general aims. Large-Scale technique strikes at the very root of the general aims. Gandhi, therefore, does not show any quarter to it.

4. Exchange and Trade: When goods that are in short supply enter the general market there is likely to be dissatisfaction which will lead finally to violence. True trade can only take place in surpluses. Supposing there are about half a dozen laddus and we give them to a boy. He goes on eating one after another. He gets a certain amount of satisfaction when he eats the first, and then the second, then the third and by the time he comes to take the fourth one, he feels a minus value. After that he is thirsty. At this stage another boy appears with a glass of water. There are one or two more laddus left and the first boy, whose appetite for laddus is satisfied, does not know how to dispose of these. He says to the other boy. "Give me some water and I will give you laddus". If they then exchange, both will profit. The thirsty boy gets the water and the hungry one gets the laddus. This is an example of exchange in surpluses which is mutually beneficial. For human satisfaction must be mutual to be real. On the other hand, if there is one pot of water and if all people want to drink, it will not be sufficient and there will be a fight for it, and in the scramble all the water may be spilt over and none will be satisfied.

Now, with an immense increase in wants, money is being used to conceal values. It does not report true human values. If we give twelve annas for a seer of milk there is no guarantee that the seller will be able to get an equivalent of one seer of milk in nutrition. He may be tempted to give his children tea instead. He may deprive the calf of its due share of its mother's milk and sell all he gets without nourishing his own children. For this state of affairs a high price in money is often responsible. It is an inducement to part with a more valuable article for a less or even a harmful substitute. Hence money deceives and creates violence. It is through the inducement of money that land is drawn away from food articles into cultivating commercially profitable crops like tobacco. The common people are not conscious of the damage done through the medium of money. Gandhiji has clearly spelt his views on the management of money.

Even trade is directed to luxuries from providing the prime necessities of man through the use of money. Rich people can afford to spend money freely and so the merchants and manufacturers organise to cater to their demands rather than supply the needs of the poor, as the latter business has little chance of profit in it. Rice cultivation will barely meet the cost of production while toilet soap manufacture will yield attractive dividends. From human standards this is an anti-social direction of economic activity made possible by the agency of money. These and such evils are both violent and dishonest. Barter or exchange in commodities will minimise such danger to a great extent. The economic models of India are hardly successful to remove the maladies on the rural front; rather these have paved the way for transfer of resources from rural to urban in the form of humans and raw material. It is high time to formulate a new model, which is based on the Gandhian ideology.

5. Conclusion: Mahatma Gandhi always canvassed about the productive techniques of industrial units and economic power. He pleaded for simplicity and reduction of wants rather than its multiplication. He pleaded for the use of less machinery and stressed the ideal of manual labour. Mechanised economy model is no longer a valid model for India for the individual will be a slave to machinery. What Gandhiji objected was not machinery as such but the craze for machinery. Economic decentralisation is related to rural economy and cottage industries located in the rural areas. India need a new matrix of economic development, in which progress is measured in terms of development of human capability, dignified employment for everyone, equitable distribution of income and wealth, ecological sustainability and social well-being of the community. Gandhiji's ideas are more relevant today than ever before, specially his philosophy of self-reliance and better productive techniques.

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