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Economic Views of Mahatma Gandhi

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Abstract

Gandhi's economics does not distinguish between economics and ethics. An economy that undermines the moral well-being of individuals and nations is immoral and therefore sinful. An industry's value should not be measured by the dividends it pays its shareholders, but by its impact on the minds, bodies and spirits of the people who work in it. Basically, you should pay more attention to people than money. The first basic principle of Gandhi's economic thinking is the special emphasis on 'simple living' which helps reduce one's needs and become independent. Consumers' growing appetites are therefore compared to the appetites of animals that go to the ends of the earth in search of gratification. A distinction must be made between "standard of living" and "standard of living", the former simply referring to the material and physical standards of food, clothing and shelter. A higher standard of living, on the other hand, can only be achieved if, in addition to material progress, serious attempts are made to acquire cultural and spiritual values and qualities.

Keywords: Ethics Khadi, Sarvoday, Swadeshi, Swaraj.

Gandhi's principles for formulating his economic thoughts were based on a call to 'return to the nature'. He would have liked people to reduce their wants in lives and to concentrate instead on development of their faculties for achievement of spiritual

goals. This would not require people in villages to madly rush to cities in search of work. All people would live more fulfilling and meaningful lives. He would justify use of machines and industrial production systems in the economy only when the outcomes serviced the fundamental and most basic needs of people. What we need today is to devise a new mode of economic development based on Gandhian ideology. This in practice would mean that public policy should give massive support to agriculture on which more than half of the population of the country depends for their livelihood and make it a remunerative occupation par with industry and the service sector. It is highly imperative we badly need a new matrix of economy development, in which progress is measured in terms of development of human capacity, dignified employment for everyone, equitable distribution of income and wealth, ecological sustainability and social wellbeing of the community. The basic hypothesis of the Gandhian system is "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not for every man's greed". Global system makes common people completely helpless in the matter of production and distribution. Gandhi visualized that it can be solved through the choice of technic of small scale production and through the system of Swaraj. Swaraj is necessary for the liberation of weaker economics from the commanding position of developed countries. Weaker countries were vainly struggling to achieve the level of growth of developed countries. The growth rate of the developed countries is a historical accident. It is doubtful that any of the developing countries will attain that level. It is equally doubtful whether the developed countries can sustain that impressive growth rate. It is to be realised that colonial foundation of the liberal economy is gradually coming to an end. Economic leadership of the west is being eroded. Comparative performance of the countries are only marginally meaningful. The dangerous game of competitive affluence should be abandoned. It is becoming compulsive for the survival of the economy. Productivity is still based on overcapacity, which creates the crisis of survival. The concept of swaraj is not an idealistic design. There is need for new conceptual framework in which each country attains swaraj. In Gandhian system every country stands on its own strength. The components of swaraj are based on two independent variables-psychology and ethics. Since resources are scarce, production cannot be increased indefinitely.

Psychology of affluence is an irrational phenomenon. The basic principles of economic activity are based on needs and not on affluence. Affluence breeds inequality, as it is based on economic distortion. Greed grows out of desire to be affluent. Human desire can be expanded to unlimited scale. This is true. But human desire also can be reduced. This is also undeniable. The crucial role is played by psychology. Values which condition the mind can change human behaviour. The goal of swaraj brings limits to human wants, and it also limits monetary gains. In the present economic system even after a very impressive turn over, no one says he can stop now, that he has enough. Enough is a word not to be found in the dictionary of economics. Gandhi saw industrialization as a plague on humanity. Because large-scale production is designed to be profit-oriented, it is bad for society because it led to the concentration of wealth and power in a select few hands. To him, industrialism was solely a function of a nation's ability to exploit. Decentralization can prevent violence, hence he favoured it. He advocated for delocalization of manufacturing as opposed to concentration in specific regions. He opposed industrialism on a grand scale for social justice reasons as well. The few would benefit at the expense of the many. He predicted that it would lead to a few people holding the majority of the economic power. Gandhi detested exclusivity and privilege. Gandhi was opposed to that machinery because it idles and replaces labour. He called using machinery a "grave sin." He opposed equipment if it made people idle and contributed to a problem with unemployment. He opposed any kind of destructive apparatus. Such devices and equipment that eliminated the need for manual labour and lessened the stress on millions of cottagers were welcomed by him. He made it clear that he was not opposed to large-scale production of only those items that villagers could easily manufacture. He thought that using machinery was harmful because millions of people who weren't otherwise employed could easily complete the same task. He emphasised the need for labor-intensive methods of production in a conservative manner because he was aware of the threat of technological unemployment. Gandhi saw industrialization as a plague on humanity. Because large-scale production is designed to be profit-oriented, it is bad for society because it led to the concentration of wealth and power in a select few hands. To him, industrialism was solely a function

of a nation's ability to exploit. Decentralization can prevent violence, hence he favoured it. He advocated for delocalization of manufacturing as opposed to concentration in specific regions. Gandhi absorbed a lot of Tolstoy's ideas through his book. Furthermore, the Gita's assertion that "one who eats without offering sacrificial fruit to others is a thief" also appealed to him. Gandhi believed that labour was the foundation of all of creation. He thought that no one should consume his bread without putting in enough effort. In order to encourage people to make use of their free time, which in rural areas equates to the working days of six months of the year, he used the idea of "bread labour." He preached and lived the physical labour gospel. Gandhi advocated prohibition. He felt that it was better for India to be poor than to have thousands of drunkards. He regarded the use of liquor as a disease rather than a vice. He believed that the consumption of alcohol was a major social evil. He didn't agree with those who held the view that the introduction of prohibition would cause a steep fall in the revenue of the Government and because of those sufficient funds would not be available for education and other social services. Swadeshi thinking is necessary to protect the interest of mass people. The craze for foreign articles among the country's elite has no limit. Their possession has become a status symbol. Such an attitude is not a healthy one; it will hamper the country's progress and development. We lose our individuality and become slaves once again. Therefore we must revive the spirit of Swadeshi and encourage the use of Indian goods, Indian resources and modernise indigenous technology. Swadeshi in consumption is essential for evolving a self-reliant economy. The positive content of Swadeshi should be used as the cornerstone for the reconstruction of our economy. The principle of Swadeshi is not based on narrow and regional consideration. If everyone makes use of locally produced goods all the goods produced in the world will be locally consumed. According to Dr. Bhole L.M. "Swadeshi is the philosophy of political, economic, administrative and technological decentralisation and diversity. It requires, among other things, the development and use of the simple, soft labour-intensive, non-violent human-faced, small scaled, decentralized, indigenous, local technologies for which international technology transfer is required next to nothing".

The modern development has not been in a position to deal with the problem of unemployment successfully. The problems of underemployment and seasonal unemployment also have become more acute because of the destruction of small allied economic activities. Swadeshi would help in solving the problem of unemployment and underemployments in respect of both the aspects -quantity and quality. In Gandhian economic order, there are two stages of achievement of the final goal of human development. The first stage is attainment of political independence and second, the economic self sufficiency (the basic needs) through the regeneration of village and cottage industries that can ensure a critical minimum level of income for every family. At the first phase of development, swaraj will, therefore, ensure political independence as well as economic security and independence. The second stage of development is a higher stage marked by a better quality of life and equal opportunities for the development of all (Sarvodaya). In the same line, Jayprakash Narayan writes about Sarvodaya, "what we desire is the establishment of a society in which there will be no exploitation, there will be perfect equality and each individual will have equal opportunities for development. He further added Sarvodaya aims at a classless, casteless and non-exploitative society." Sarvodaya is neither dreamy nor idealistic. It is pragmatic and can be put into practice. It aims at reducing inequality in society. Friendship, respect, sympathy for every human being is the path of Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya wants to create a society, which will be casteless, classless and devoid of exploitation and in which every individual as also community will find scope for its all-round development. Truth and non-violence would make it possible.

According to Sarvodaya material progress is not enough, man must attain spiritual progress also. Social justice, equality and new social structure are the important aspects of Sarvodaya. In this context, Justice Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari says, "the concept of justice can be basically moral and human only. Man's right to live is his birthright and it includes living with dignity because undignified living cannot be human. For this purpose there will have to be social

structure, which will make for justice in all walks of life. This is what Mahatma Gandhi had called 'cent percent Swadeshi.' He has alluded to seven social sins in this respect."

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