



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Gandhi's Economic Ideas for Communal & Economic Equality

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### Introduction:-

Mahatma Gandhi had multifaceted personality. His economic aims were different from conventional economics. His aims were Sarvodaya, full employment, use of country's own resources, preservation of ecology, justice in income distribution and opportunities. For Gandhiji the means are as important as the aims. The means must be nonviolent, ethical, and truthful in all economic spheres. He provided the new economic system for those means. He advocated trusteeship, decentralization of economic activities, labour intensive technology, and first priority to rural India. He explained that capitalism and mechanization would lead to unemployment, poverty, and inequality and he always advocated Swadeshi. Gandhiji's ideal village belongs to the pre-British period, when Indian villages were the small republics undisturbed by the periodical visitations of barbarous hordes. This republican character of the villages was destroyed by the British rule. Therefore, in Gandhian plan of rural reconstruction, the ancient republican village without any kind of exploitation served as a model unit. Gandhiji aimed at the attainment of village Swaraj and said in 1942, My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, Independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants and get inter-dependent for many other in which dependence is necessity.

Gandhiji was the first man in the world who provided a practical alternative economic system against the prevailing economic system. The village based economy of China and Israel, the small scale industry base economy of Japan are nearer to Gandhian ideas in some aspect. A growth model for economic development is shown on the basis of Gandhi economic thoughts. This model is applicable to developing economies and India.

This study examines that Gandhian Concept of rural development and how its potential economic impact could change the poverty status in India.

**Key Words:- Gandhi's idea on Economics, Communal and Economic Equality.**

India live in villages, naturally the development of the country depends on the development of villages. All the goods and services necessary for the village member should be grown within the village. In a word, every village should be a self-contained republic. If every village distributes its surplus produce to the poor villagers then there will not be the problem of poverty and starvation in the rural areas. Only this can help eradicating poverty and thus people can be happy and self-reliant. [1]

Mahatma Gandhi, as a visionary of India, had a very clear perception of its villages and made an emphatic assertion that "India lives in her seven and half lakhs of villages. He also found that progress of the country lies in the development of majority of its rural villages, develop rural economy, industry and rural skills. Gandhiji found that only way of bringing hope of good living to the rural people is by making the village the central place of economic programme. He wanted to bring about rural reconstruction with sound scientific and spiritual values.

The Gandhian view of self-sufficient village economy is also relevant in the context of reducing poverty and unemployment in rural India. In 1972-73, 54.1 per cent people lived below the poverty line in rural India. This slightly decreased to 51.2 per cent in 1977-78. In 1983-84 it again fell down to 45.7 per cent. In 1993-94 this rate again came down to 37.3 per cent. In 1999-2000 it was roughly 30 per cent. The data presented here about poverty in rural India have been gathered from various issues of Economic Survey and Planning Commission. Although the ratio of poverty has been declining, roughly one-third of the rural people still live in abject poverty. In order to improve the conditions of the rural poor it is necessary to expand rural industries further at a rapid rate. At the same time it is essential to review seriously the rural anti-poverty programmes in the light of lapses noticed and in the context of formulating the tenth five year plan (2002-2007). [2]

His economic aims were different from conventional economics. His aims were sarvodaya, full employment, use of country's own resources, preservation of ecology, justice in income distribution and opportunities. Everybody should be given the right to earn according to his capacity using just means. The rich should serve the society after satisfying his needs. Life is not meant for enjoyment only, but it is meant to help others. [3] Dr. Usha Arun Chaturvedi wrote in his article "Gandhi- A Unique Practical Economist" about Gandhiji's economic idea- "He created a strong background for his economic thought. He studied the history of British India written by R. C. Dutt. He collected information about Indian Economy before British rule and the causes of the decline of Indian Economy during the British rule. He travelled all over India nearly for a year after his return from South Africa in 1915 to understand thoroughly about the Indian condition. He also understood regarding the prevailing different economic systems of the world. He studied Wealth of Nations written by the father of western economics Adam Smith to know about conventional economics. He read Das Capital written by Karl Marx to understand socialist thinking. He examined all these ideas in the context of India and Ethics.

With this strong background he had his own unique way of thinking about economics, economy, economic aims, and economic development process. He examined the usefulness and practicability of his economic thoughts by practicing them in the country. After getting favourable results he advocated them" As resources of the earth are limited, we will not be able to provide affluence to all people of the earth. Even if resources are available, the delicate eco-balance of the earth's environment will be disturbed and destroyed by the industrial processes necessary for taking affluence and high standard of living to all people. These are some of the reasons why Gandhi argued that unlimited economic growth with a view to the creation of affluence is impossible of attainment."

#### **Swadeshi:-**

Swadeshi literally means 'of one's own country.' Swadeshi is defined as that spirit within us which restricts us to use the service of our immediate surrounding to the exclusion of the more remote. It aims at the removal of unemployment and poverty. It doesn't advocate rejection of foreign trade, in fact it advocates a healthy and non-exploitative form of trade. According to Bapuji, Swadeshi is not just good, it does comprise of our culture, tradition and values. Bapu wanted that people in India should have sufficient demand for their produce and therefore, he placed for the use of Swadeshi goods. However, it is wrong to assume that Bapuji was altogether against foreign goods. It is clear from his word that says, "It is criminally foolish to produce the goods which are not profitable to be produced in our country, instead of producing them we should import them. [4]

#### **Trusteeship:-**

According to Gandhiji, trusteeship is a way of life rather than just a method to achieve a particular end. According to his holistic approach, "everything on this earth belongs to God and is from God. Therefore, it was for this people as a whole not for a particular individual. Everybody on this earth has a natural right to at least the basic necessities of life, just like the birds and the beasts have. If somehow, an individual had more than his proportionate share, he was a trustee of that portion for God's people".

#### **Industrialisation:-**

There is widespread misunderstanding that Gandhi was against Industrialisation. He was of course, not in favour of the so-called labour saving machinery or technology, which leads to unemployment, poverty, urbanisation, deformation, desertification, pollution etc. He thought that large scale industries should be owned by the state and administered wholly for public good.

**Villagism:-**

Gandhiji characterised the ideal society of his dream 'gram-swaraj'. It is rural civilisation where man and women in small face-to-face communities would, by their activity, be self-sufficient in meeting their basic needs and yet be interdependent for many other in which dependence is necessary.

**Decentralisation:-**

Gandhiji strongly advocated decentralisation of economic system. In the traditional sector, where agriculture and industry were properly integrated, production centres were scattered all through the villages. Gandhiji believed that centralisation is the root caused of exploitation, which leads to unemployment and poverty.

**Communal Unity**

Communal unity has a wider significance than political unity. Gandhiji found that social stability of the country cannot be achieved without the social unity between all communities. Everybody is agreed about the significance of communal unity, which means an unbreakable heart unity. For the attainment of communal unity, every social worker should aim at developing and encouraging the bond of love and regard among the Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Jew member and cultivate a unity based on such mutual love and regard.

"In such a happy state of things there would be no disgraceful cry at the stations such as 'Hindu-water' and 'Muslim-water' or 'Hindu tea' or 'Muslim tea' There would be no separate rooms or pots for Hindus and non-Hindus in schools and colleges, no communal schools, colleges and hospitals." [5]

Gandhiji found that social stability of the country cannot be achieved without the social unity between these communities. He pleaded and laboured for the Hindu Muslim unity to consolidate corporate strength for better purposes in India. For this Gandhiji recommended the following measures.

- \*The Hindu-Muslim unity can be achieved by educating the people in a sense of common citizenship.
- \*They should enjoy equal rights which flow from duties duly performed
- \*Hindus as well as Muslims must follow tolerance regarding the communal matters both of them must respect the sentiments of each of their community
- \*They must reconcile themselves to the new environment of living together as free and equal citizens.

**Economic Equality**

Gandhi had considered views on the question of ownership also. While capitalism upholds private ownership without any kind of control by the state, Marxian socialism advocates state ownership of all the means of production and distribution. Both models were unacceptable to Gandhi because he could see that both were exploitative and would lead to the concentration of wealth and power and were thus inconsistent with the principle of non-violence. So he advocated a new method that would substitute both capitalist and socialist forms of ownership. He called it trusteeship. A group of economists after discussing with his ideas on trusteeship as a revolutionary method of ownership and management, drafted the trusteeship formula and published it with his approval.

Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed. Gandhi believed that all human beings must hold their property and talents as trustees. As all wealth and talents are socially created and truly belong to the whole society and so they must be managed accordingly. Those who hold them can use only what they need for their upkeep but the rest must be used for the welfare of society.

Economic equality means that everyone shall have sufficient and nutritious food to eat, proper shelter to live in, adequate khadi to wear, timely medical relief and necessary facilities for education. It also implies abolition of the eternal conflict between the capital and the labour by the levelling down of the rich in whom bulk of the Nation's wealth is concentrated and the levelling up of the poor. For this, the constructive workers shall strive to level down the few rich and level up the semi-starved millions through trusteeship system. It does not mean that everyone would literally have the same amount but it means that everyone should have enough for one's needs. [6] The ultimate aim of Gandhian concept of economic equality is equal pay for all. The Bhangi, the doctor, the lawyer, the teachers etc. would get the same wages for an honest day's work.

## Conclusion

Gandhiji was of the view that only a rural civilization based on the principles of self-reliance, self sufficiency, simplicity and limitation of wants, mutual aid and co-operation, participation and sharing and finally caring and mutual empowerment through meaningful Community interaction is sustainable and helpful for human spiritual evolution. He wanted economic planning for a new India to incorporate this vision into it and construct an appropriate development model. Gandhian vision of development was not accepted by Nehru who virtue of being the first Prime Minister, became the chief architect of the new Indian nation. Nehru himself admitted in the Indian Parliament, the mistake was that he failed to see the relevance of the Gandhian programme in the reconstruction of this country which was essentially rural and traditional. If we view with the Gandhian perspective there is nothing economically or morally justifiable in the New Economic Policy and therefore need to be reoriented or rejected. Exploitation and domination are to be resisted. Gandhiji had presented a strategy for this in his Constructive Programme and Satyagraha. It is for us to decide- either to be guided by the invisible hand of the market or “The still, small voice” within us.

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