

The Socio - Economic Thought of M. K. Gandhi

Dr. Biswajit Baidya

Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, I. C. V. College, Belonia, South Tripura, Tripura, India

Abstract: *India is imitated and appreciated worldwide for the biggest victory of history, accomplished with the greatest weapons mankind has ever used - - - nonviolence and truthfulness. However, in the recent times violence has become the order of the day and moral values have stopped down to an all time low. People are increasingly being influenced by the western culture and in the process moving away from our traditions, culture and value systems. At a time when the entire world is keen on practicing Gandhian principles, we are avoiding Gandhi. It is high time academicians, intellectuals and elders in the society should review seriously the situation and capture this dangerous phenomenon by carefully nurturing the right values in the younger generation who are the future of the nation. This is very important at this moment when the nation is poised to take off as a global economic leader because without the right social and ethical environment, no amount of economic development can contribute to improvement in overall quality life. At this moment Gandhian philosophy is of more relevance and Gandhian values and principles for human development must be actively promoted among the present generation to help them lay the right foundation for a happy tomorrow. If we observe the works and achievements of Mahatma Gandhi's entire life, we can see that he put people above all; he also gave immense importance to the socio - economic life of the people. There were various types of social ills in India at that time; Gandhi was preoccupied with the deep thought of rooting them out. Mahatma Gandhi tried to solve these problems through his principled social and economic thinking.*

Keywords: Society, economy, ethics, value

At the end of the eighteenth century as a result of industrial revolution, capitalism was created on the soil of Europe or the socialism of Karl Marx at the end of the twentieth century after the second world war - - - none of these were accepted by Mahatma Gandhi; right - left centred thought, communism, socialism without accepting capitalist ideals. He developed the concept of economic theory by understanding the moral sense of people from different parts of the world. Gandhi's ethics did not discuss in detail such complex issues as growth, investment, demand, supply, monopoly, oligopoly, pricing, production etc. . Gandhi's economics discussed the real situation of people at that time which is relevant not only in India, but also in the public welfare of many developing countries of the world, even after seven decades of his death.

Mahatma Gandhi believed in the traditional beliefs and ideas of the admission year. He was a true Vaishnava and a Hindu in the real sense. In the context of the ongoing freedom movement in India at that time, he was providing economic theory based on cultural and spiritual traditions. Lord Buddha's self sacrifice and Bhagavad - Gita's aparigraha shaped his economic thinking and meditation. He tried to tie economics and ethics together - - - "True economics stands for social justice and moral values". According to him, the best scriptures of this world, Gita, Bible, Koran, Granth - Sahib and Tripitak are the best and safe economic platform.

The second aspect of Gandhiji's economic thought was the context of the industrial revolution in England. He was a student in England in the last decades of the 19th century. He recorded in his book Hind - Swaraj the ideas that formed in his mind by talking to his fellow - men and people from different sections of the society which was later reflected in his economic thinking. Mention a quote from the book, "In the past, people worked as long as they wanted in the open air. Now one thousand people work together in factory. Their condition is worse than animals. They are obliged to work at the risk of their lives. They are doing serious work for the millionaire owner. They are now money - mad,

having lost real physical strength and courage only to the lure of money". It is easy to understand that this evil effect of industrialization struck deep in Gandhiji's mind.

The third subject was written by John Ruskin, "Unto the Last" and written by Leo Tolstoy, "What we do then?" - - - The profound impact of these two books. Political, economic, poverty issues etc. were understood by Gandhiji from these two books. Leo Tolstoy in this context, "Theory of Bread Labour" - - - - - for the basic needs of life, physical hardship theory is mentioned, which today's intellectuals are also doing.

The last factor influencing Gandhiji's economics as perceived in the fourth or general view was the Swaraj Principle. According to Gandhiji, the word 'Swaraj' means self - rule through self - reliance. Self - rule based upon self restraint. Only when the inner strength and indomitable will power of the individual is awakened to become economically independent, the person gets the strength to stand - up against the whole world. It is inspires self - reliance in the world. Gandhiji emphasis on swadeshi while fighting for swaraj. Indians feel that the foundations of Gandhiji's economics were laid in view of all the above. He was not an economist with a traditional university degree. He was political figure. Due to which people from different strata of society used to come to him with different problems. He was willing to solve their problems. These approaches to solving problems, statements are considered as him economic thought.

The present day economy is a production - centric economy. This mass produced product needs to be sold quickly. This requires increasing the purchasing power of all sections of public especially the people of the village. If this logic has some validity the challenge to the technocratic value - system is likely to get legitimacy. What is needed is, as Schumacher puts it, a technology with human face. Many persons call it as Gandhian revivalism. Gandhi here represents a symbol. It is not a romantic revivalism. It is a

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necessary for the survival of human quality. Gandhian paradigm is a valid alternative to technocratic system.

Under the Gandhian model the development will be country specific. It can be called economy of swaraj which does not encourage affluence, and at the same time remove poverty. Under this system globalization will be redundant. This is the essence of Gandhian economy. In his Autobiography Gandhi did not want to construct an icon of himself. Underneath his vision there has been preference for moral order. Gandhi was frank in his judgment of morality. All activities, economic, political and social have moral contents.

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