



Gandhian Ideas of Self Sufficient Rural Economy

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Abstract: Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. The Gandhian economics will have to be studied particularly in the context of India. The principle of Gandhian Economic Idea is small scale and locally oriented production, using with local resources and meeting local needs. So that employment opportunities are available throughout the country. He was interested in developing the villagers as self-sufficient units. He thought that the development of rural civilization on the basis of self-sufficient villages would result in the decentralization of economic power. In this paper an attempt is made to present economic ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and present the views of Gandhi on self-sufficient village Economy, environment-pro and eco-friendly rural industrialization.

Key Words: Employment Generation, Human Resource, Poverty, Sarvodaya,

Introduction:

Economic Development of a country depends on the proper utilization of both human and non-human resources. India, at the time of her independence, had an economy with a low level of economic and technological development, low per capital income, slow pace of development of economic and social institutions and outdated methods of production techniques. Our objective then was to attain and accelerate the economic development of the country.

Gandhian approach has always said about the voluntary wants, the need for self-sufficient village communities and the issues relating to better balance between man and nature. Gandhi wanted to have an ideal society of his own imagination and his economic ideas are a part and parcel of his philosophical and sociological ideas. He was interested in the growth of human beings and more significantly the growth of the deprived and underprivileged group of people. He was, in fact, the supporter of the

maximization of social welfare and he had a belief that the growth of an economy is relied on the development of the totality of human personality. According to him, an increase in personal income is an indication of the growth of national income. But the opposite may not be true i.e. the growth of national income may not always benefit every man in society.

Gandhian View of Self-Sufficient Village Economy

Gandhi holds the view of the maximization of social welfare and for this he gives prime importance to the welfare of the individuals by reducing inequalities in income and wealth. According to Gandhi every person should be provided with minimum necessities i.e. food, shelter, and clothing. Concentration of wealth to a few groups of people certainly will shatter the dream of a society which will be socialist in nature. Gandhi is in favour of the self-sufficient village economy where the villages will be the independent economic



units. In agriculture that techniques will be adopted, which will not deplete the soil and pollute the environment. For this farmers should use eco-friendly production technique by using lesser and lesser amount of fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides. He prefers well irrigation instead of large hydro-electric projects since this will lead to exploitation. As regards the ownership of land holding, Gandhi is against the zamindari system and ownership of land should go to the actual tillers of the soil. He also viewed that there should be communal ownership of land for balanced cultivation and the surplus land, if any must be distributed to the rest of the village communities.

India lives in villages. Naturally the development of the country depends on the development of villages. All the goods and services necessary for the village members 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. Agricultural sector alone cannot solve the problem of rural poverty and unemployment. That's why Gandhi gives stress on the growth of the rural industries like khadi, handlooms, sericulture and handicrafts. He opines that large-scale industries make people lazy and help concentration of wealth in the hands of few. On the contrary, rural industries are based on family labour and required less amount of capital. Raw materials are also collected from local markets and the goods thus produced are sold in the local markets. Therefore there

is no problem of production and market. Large scale production creates conflicts between labour and capital. Here capital takes upper hand over labour. Such conflicts may not occur in the case of rural industries. Rural industries are the symbols of unity and equality. In India large-scale industries have been concentrated in a few big cities where as rural areas are without big industries. Concentration of these industries in few cities has led to a number of problems. The major problem is the problem of overpopulation in the industrialized areas. With this there arises pollution in the air and water. In addition, large-scale industries promoted monopolistic trends and unequal distribution of income. Rural industries, on the other hand, help decentralization of economic activities and a large proportion of income generated in these industries gets distributed among the workers and among a very large number of people. Gandhi is not in favour of large-scale industries in the sense that these industries are not related to a vast population living in rural areas. Thus industrialization, according to Gandhi, does not help the growth of the personality; contrarily it helps only the material progress of a few. Our handicrafts were destroyed by the use of machinery by the English rulers. Machinery, being capital-intensive, displace labour and naturally augments employment and under-employment.

Relevance of Gandhi's Economic Ideas

For attaining smooth development of the economy, it is imperative to develop all the regions of the country simultaneously. The overall progress of the entire economy depends on the balanced development of all the regions. In India there exists a huge regional



disparity. In relative terms some states are advanced economically and some other states are backward. Even within a state some districts are more backward than the rest. In this context Gandhian economics, is relevant which supports the attainment of self-sufficiency level of industrialisation or uniform economic pattern for each region. The Gandhian economics is of the view that every man should increase his personal income and standard of living by exploiting the existing natural and human resources fully eco-friendly.

In line with Gandhi's dream of expanding village industries, industrial policy resolutions of 1948, 1956 and 1977 have offered a special favour for the development of small scale and village industries. The village and small-scale industries have been playing an important role in Indian economy in terms of employment generation and poverty alleviation. This is due to fact that these industries are labour-intensive and capital saving. In order to be more competitive in the world market the Khadi and Village Industries Commission has introduced Khadi denim jeans and Sarvodaya brand. These are eco-friendly and bio-degradable natural products and have high demand in the world market. Mechanization in agriculture has increased productivity but at the same time reduced employment opportunity.

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)

Conclusion:

Gandhi is of the view that full employment of human resources is the basic need of a country. It is true that national income will increase if each and every persons is employed fully. This cannot be possible only with the development of large-scale industries because of their labour-saving nature. Agricultural sector too cannot solve the problem of unemployment or underemployment due to its seasonal nature. Therefore mechanization and large scale production cannot provide the solution to the problem of poverty and unemployment. Self-sufficient village economy is an alternative solution.

And in this context the role of institutions in the rural sector can play a vital role. This can fulfill Gandhi's dreams of self-sufficient village economy.

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