



The Gandhian Strategy to the Socio-Economic Problem

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ABSTRACT

Gandhiji strongly opposed industrialization, urbanization, large-scale industry, and the use of machines. Gandhiji's ambition was a small, independent village republic comprising agriculture and a few minor industries. He was a strong supporter of manual labor. He asserts that everyone needs to work physically in order to support themselves. No worker is inferior to the other worker. Whether one does mental or manual work, it is the same and the wages must be equal. As long as any commodity could be produced by human hand, machines should not be used. Industrialism leads to overproduction, which in turn leads to a search for markets and imperialism. He wanted every village to be self-sufficient. Gandhian economics or the Gandhian strategy to the socio economic problem is determined by his vision of man. Insofar as man is by nature a moral, spiritual and religious being, Gandhian economics is also deeply rooted in morality and spirituality. The moral and spiritual nature of man means that man is more than a living body and its needs or urges; that his character, history and destiny are shaped by his attitude and behaviour, even in economic activities towards God and the universe. Gandhi believed that our issue goes beyond economics. It's more of a problem with the entire man. The economic man's abstraction was not created by Gandhi. He encouraged everyone to examine human nature holistically, but especially economists.

Keywords: *Gandhian economics, Self-sufficiency, Mechanisation, Individual labour*

Introduction

Gandhian economics is an economics of the spirit- an economics whose criteria arise outside the exclusively economic sphere. In other words, the criteria of Gandhian economics are spiritual and are integrally and socially human. According to these criteria not every quantitative increase would represent progress. The reason is that progress is fundamentally qualitative and must always be evaluated by its overall impact on human life, even when it is tied to quantity. Progress in other words is social and spiritual and not merely materialistic. One may even go further and say that progress consists often in ascendancy over matter and is independent of it; it depends wholly on man as spirit, consisting in the mastery of the spirit over matter. That is why renunciation of material goods represents a measure or step in

progress strictly so called. Gandhian economics is built on an ascetical concept and ideal of progress, namely renunciation; it is a perfect blend of economics and spirituality.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for this article is primarily qualitative, focusing on interpretive analysis of primary and secondary texts related to Gandhian economics. The study involves examining Gandhi's writings, speeches, and historical accounts to capture his philosophical outlook on socio-economic issues, especially as articulated in his texts, such as *Harijan* and *Young India*. The analysis seeks to contextualize Gandhi's ideas within both his own cultural and philosophical influences, like the Bhagavad Gita and Indian spiritual tradition, and Western thinkers such as Tolstoy, Ruskin, and Bondareff.

Using a hermeneutic approach, the article interprets Gandhian economics as a moral and spiritual paradigm that challenges modern capitalist and materialist frameworks. This methodology emphasizes understanding the core principles behind Gandhi's ideas on self-sufficiency, the rejection of excessive mechanization, and the prioritization of community welfare over individual profit. A comparative textual analysis also highlights Gandhi's critiques of capitalism and socialism, positioning Gandhian economics as a distinct model rooted in non-violence and social harmony.

Gandhian Economics

Gandhian economics is structurally socialistic as opposed to laissez-faire or individualistic. Instead of considering the individual social unit, the economic good is understood in terms of the entire society. And the economic good is determined by society, not by the individual. Human society is geographically organized from the family into the village, district, province, and nation. They are all components of the global society. Each unit must continue to be open to all others, particularly the larger unit, in order to determine the economic good. Therefore, economic activity must, from its abundance, meet the requirements of at least its immediate neighbor, even though its primary goal is to meet the needs of the local or regional society.

Concretely speaking, the family must serve the village, which in turn must serve the district, which in turn must serve the nation, which in turn should serve the world. Each unit's economy would only be one of sufficiency and not superfluities when it attempted to meet both its own and its neighbors' requirements. Because the neighboring unit cannot afford to stockpile and enjoy superfluities when the last or least member of society is struggling to meet basic needs [1].

To quote Gandhi, "The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into water tight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of sound and fury signifying nothing" [2].

Gandhi's economy would also be stable because essentials are probably going to stay the same. When an economy is focused on the many superfluities or luxuries rather than the few basics, it becomes unstable and prone to inflation. Regardless of the mechanism of supply and demand, prices would be constant and not rising in a stable economy since there would be less incentive to take advantage of or deprive others in order to further one's own interests. In other words, the service motive would rule over the exploiting, profiteering motive. The Profit motive generates an economy of its own kind. In it, money and matter take precedence over man, and the true scale of values is perverted. In the service- motivated Gandhian economics, man is to rule over money, goods and economy. He is to judge the existing economy and work for the kind of economy needed from time to time rather than allow any one economy or structure to dominate over him, or impose itself on him. A self-generating economy gives man no freedom of choice over it. The Gandhian is a charismatic economy where every economic structure or arrangement can be reassessed and adapted either periodically or whenever the need arises [3].

Self-sufficiency

As the economics of sufficiency and self-sufficiency, the Gandhian self-sufficiency economy needs to be structurally small and simple. It would be a system of life where people find sufficiency in a few things like food, clothes, shelter, health and education. Qualitative differences in them are not ruled out. Only the selection of one grade rather than another would be guided by consideration for the last, the least and the weakest member in the economic community. Equality and community or fraternity are and therefore for greater values in the Gandhian mind than possessions their enjoyment. Self-sufficiency means self-support and non-dependence on foreign or distant parts for essential goods. Hence, where nature does not prevent it, every part should ordinarily produce the essential goods it needs. Gandhi advocates independence of foreign lands for essential goods, because dependence, when not mutual, is a condition favourable to exploitation and inequality and as is a distortion and negation of true values. However, nondependent and self-support do not mean callous refusal to help the neighbouring or foreign country when it is rendered unable to support itself. This is the right place for cooperation. Gandhi envisages a small and simply structured

economy, because with growth in size the exploitative tendencies also increase and manifest themselves in lazy dependence on the one hand and exorbitant profit on the other [4].

Mechanisation

It is for this same reason that Gandhi is opposed to large scale mechanisation. If mechanisation also ensures for all economic independence and freedom from greed (which is not likely), he would have no objection to it. But historically, British textile industry broke India's economic and consequently political and spiritual independence Hence all large scale industry has become for Gandhi the convergent symbol of exploitation.

Asked once whether he was against all machinery, Gandhi replied, "My answer is emphatically "No". But I am against its indiscriminate multiplication. I refuse to be dazzled by the seeming triumph of machinery. I am uncompromisingly against all destructive machinery. But simple tools and instruments and such machinery as "save" individual labour and lighten the burden of the millions of cottages I would welcome [5]. Again, "What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all; I want the concentration of wealth not in the hands of few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might [6].

As large-scale machinery or mechanised industry is the symbol of exploitation and enslavement, the human hand or manual labour is the Gandhian symbol of freedom and spiritual joy. Labour has a premium over capital or material resources, because labour is the prime factor in the creation of economic value. To contribute to the creation of this value therefore and in order not to be dependent nor greedy of exploitation, everyone must work manually. And capital, whether made with labour of one's own hands or inherited from the labour of others, must be held in trusteeship to the community which has helped to create it. That is why in the Gandhian economy there is strictly speaking no private property. This Gandhian economy marks a great step forward from capitalism [7].

Conclusion

The non-violent non-cooperative approach to conflicts and agitations differentiates the Gandhian economy from the Communist and other violence-borne approaches. To sum up, it may be said that due regard being had for equality and fraternity, and for the last and the least in the economic community, each would contribute according to his ability and

receive according to his need. This in brief is the Gandhian answer to our socio-economic problem.

Gandhian economics can be traced to a double tradition: the written tradition of the ideas of Bondueref and Tolstoy of Russia and of Ruskin of England and the Isopanishad of India on the one hand, and the unwritten but lived tradition of his own ashrams in South Africa and India on the other. Though not enunciated as a systematized body of thought, but rather spoken and written about at different times, Gandhian economics does still have the unity and consistency of a good life that has been well thought out. Its beauty does not minimize the difficulty of implementing the Gandhian economies. It would seem to be designed for saints like him- self. In breaking every idol of conventional economics and placing man, the universal man, at the centre of every economic decision, Gandhi has really proved to be a revolutionary prophet.

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