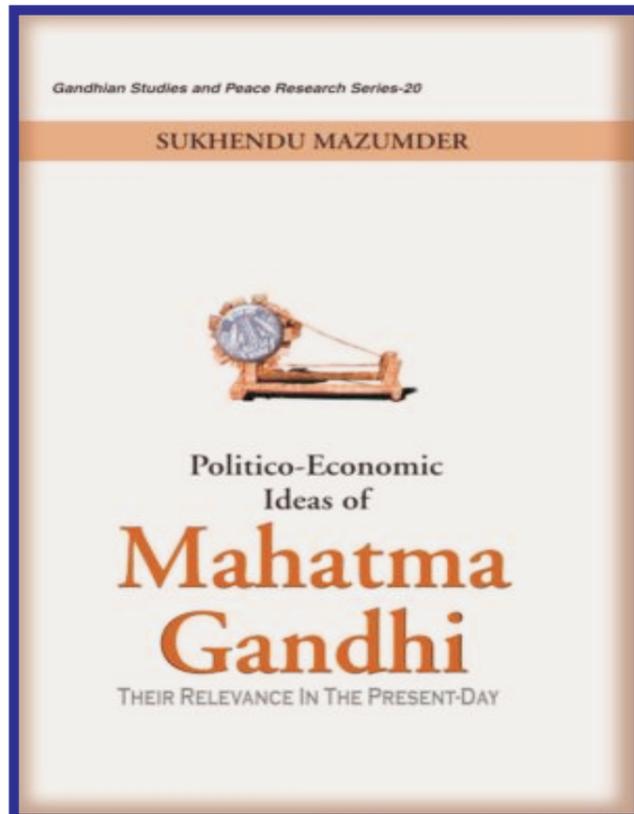


ECONOMIC IDEAS OF MAHATMA GANDHI

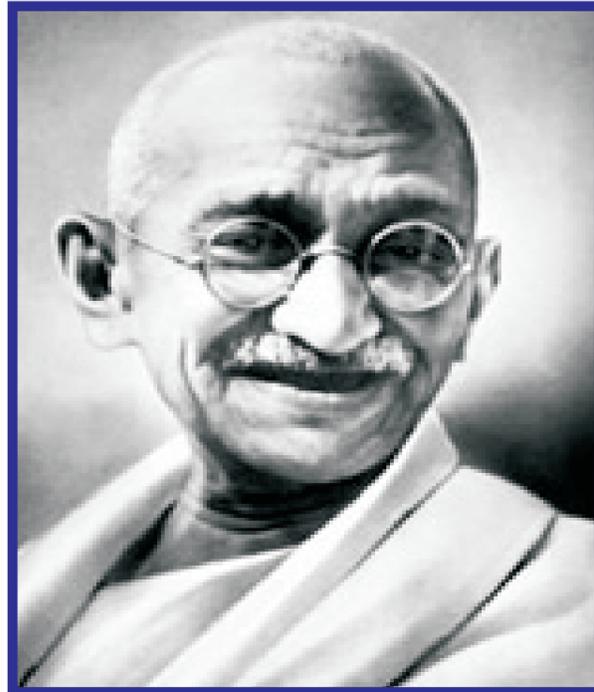
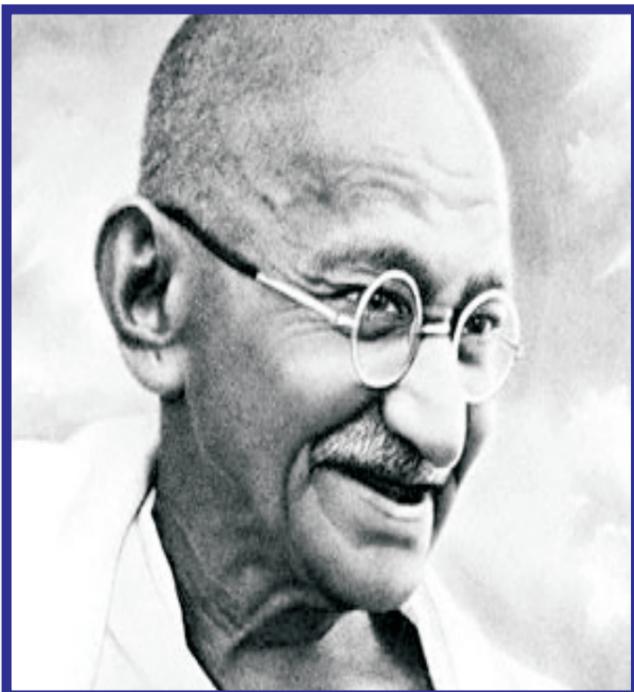


Abstract:-

Gandhi in his living, thinking, teaching and in his death is an inexhaustible subject, with no beginning and no end. At the outset we should acknowledge that Gandhi was not an Economist as such. He was much more than that. He has a saint, a Mahatma and the father of Nation. He had not studied economics as a subject in the curriculum not had he the opportunity of reading standard books on modern economics. He drew his thoughts on economic affairs from three sources, The First was his ethical and spiritual conviction, the second was his close involvement with the economic condition of the people particularly the rural people who formed over 80% of the country in his day, and the third was his reading and reflection and the result of his putting into action what he read of the utopian Buskin's 'unto this last' and Tolstoy's 'The kingdom of God is within' you. His thoughts were shaped by Bible also and some time he read Marx's Das Capital.

Keywords:

Economic Ideas , living, thinking, teaching , Mahatma Gandhi.



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INTRODUCTION

There were some book, which helped to give the shape of Gandhi's thoughts, but actually he was very differing than these all. Gandhi is not a name. It is a philosophy the philosophy which is firmly rooted in Vedic Philosophy. He gave the world message of truth and non-violence. In economics, he presented the approach of trusteeship. The message of trusteeship emerges from Ishopanishad where it has been established that whatever is there in this world is the property of God. And he has created all this for all his creatures. There is plenty for everyone's need in this world. Man should consume thing with the sense of sacrifice and he should not take other's share. Upanishad says one should not be greedy and should always remember that it is not his property. This has been given to him for proper utilization. He is only a trustee of God's property. Gandhian economics has a peculiar characteristic that it gives more importance to the man than wealth associated with man i.e. his emphasis was on the human capital and its development rather than on money capital or wealth. He considered a country with better human capital as more likely to grow and lead to a happy unhappiness. His economics can, therefore, be termed as normative in character. He preached the idea of self discipline along with economic development. According to Gandhiji we cannot have a nation of happy citizens unless we learn to discipline ourselves and observe a restraint on our wants. He stressed the fact that a nation without ethics and basic human values cannot provide a non-violent and peaceful life to its citizens.

SOME BASIC CONCEPTS:

1) Agriculture:

Agriculture is an advance stage of human civilization over hurting era. Since then, importance of land remained vital for any agrarian society. Being absentee of industrialization, land remained the important source of livelihood, means of production, status of power and symbol of prestige. Land possession made a symbol of monopoly; and centralization of land created disparity among the villagers. By hereditary land transfers from father to son, therefore centralization of land remains in continuous.

In India, generally tributary mode of surplus appropriation continued predominantly until the Mughal Rule. The Mughal Empire played important role in shopping land relations from tributary to revenue farming. It is argued that imposition of revenue farming. It is argued that imposition of revenue farming as an institutional arrangement was not only the root of inequality and poverty but also the seed of the growth of the Zamindar class (Tandon, ed al. 1936:2). This mechanism of revenue collection was further reinforced by the company Government, which entered into agreement with Zamindars (ibid, 2-3). In this process, small peasantries were exploited; and due to inability of paying revenue, they had to leave their ownership to pay revenue and were forced to convert themselves into 'tenants' to Zamindar.

Various peasants' movement activated against the British rule, and therefore, the national leaders had to set agenda and programmers for agrarian reforms and institutional arrangements to address the issues of poverty, inequality and exploitation.

At this backdrop, this exercise is attempted to examine the views of Gandhaji on land issues.

Gandhiji was not against Zamindari system, but he made oppose for exploitation. On May 29, 1934 Gandhiji made observation on M.R. Massni's Socialistic Program me: "The elimination of Landlordism clearly means usurpation of the zamindari and Talukdari tracts in clause 13. I am not for elimination but for just regulation of the relation between land lords and tenants" (CWMG, Vol. 58, P. 37) For Gandhi if there is usurpation of land, he suggests", "Zamindars should be compensated if their land to be taken away" (Ibid Vol. 58, P. 251).

In 1938 in Calcutta, he quoted his view about Zamindari, "I say Zamindari system should be mended, and if it cannot be mended, it would end itself". (ibid, Vol. 67 P. 22). However, with the mounting pressure of mobilization of farmers, he agreed for the abolition of Zamindari system by using non violent movement. He expressed his agony on may 7, 1939 when kissans resorting to violence. They fight with Zamindars. If you want to abolish Zamindari it is well and good. Do so through non-violence (ibid Vol. 69 P. 241).

According to Gandhiji's view, he was directly in favour of Zamindari system. But later he agreed to the proposition of the addition of Zamindari system. Gandhiji always remained conscious of abstaining violent resistance against Zamindaras, which directly and indirectly helped Zamindars to retain land in their possession. But he was against injustice and exploitation of the 'tenants' by zamindar; to resist them, he suggested non-violent and non-cooperation movement.

2) Sustainable Development:

Gandhi is regarded as an apostle of humanism and what is good and virtuous in man and he is among those eminent thinkers and philosophers who could foresee the social and ecological consequences of economic development. He noted that nature was being destroyed by unlimited industrialization and massive urbanization which were thought necessary for development. These processes were creating problems of ecological balance. He was highly critical of modern civilization (Misra 1997: 122).

Industrialization in vast proportion is destructing human's dignity and is environment increasing urbanization. This kind development is not favorable for today and tomorrow. Gandhi said, decentralize and simplify production in such a way which will help to promote human creativity and develop individual personality which alone can achieve harmony between man and his environment.

Sustainable development is a macro concept which qualifies the sustained and perennial nature of development of the country region or society. It is defined as one, which can be sustained over a long period of time keeping the value of assets of the society intact. It is held that Gandhiji's 'Model' of non-violent development satisfies the requisites of sustainable development. The Gandhian perspectives are non-materialistic, non-violent, harmonistic, egalitarian and value driven. These values highlights the virtue of simplicity of social and inner peace, the sanctify, necessity and dignity of manual labour, and the valuation of the spiritual and the moral over the sensual and the material planes. The central unit is the eternal village and villagers, who are deemed to be reservoirs of what is intrinsically valuable in society. Village-level self sufficient is an objective.

Gandhi was the advocate of sustainable development in the world and he was against the massive industrialization for the existing world precisely because of its undue exploitation. Gandhi was an absolutist (Leary, 1998 : 133) Man's continuous contact with nature as part of his daily life, Gandhi argued, prevented the pollution of air and water, destruction of animal and vegetable life and above all it pre-empted the large urban conglomerations which lead to all such problems (Sethi, 1978: 212) Rural industrialization forms a central plank in the Gandhian model of non-violent development, which is itself drawn for a holistic prescription for the social and individual construction of the good and virtuous life (Saith, 2001 : 88).

He was opposed to modern industry because it tends to create unequal distribution of money and tends to create unequal distribution of money and exploitation of the persons who worked for their masters, and it would create unemployment in a very populated country. He welcomed tools and instruments, which lightened the burden of the millions of cottages, such factories should not work for profit but for the benefit of humanity.

3) Swadeshi :

Swadeshi means to use of all home made products to the exclusion of foreign products which are not beneficial to the people of the country. Swadeshi is one of the most important principles of Gandhi's economic thought, as there exists a relationship between this doctrine and others, which are fundamental doctrines of Gandhian economics. In fact, to understand Gandhi's view of Swadeshi, one has to go through the entire gamut of his thought-social, political, economic and religious, Etymologically the term may mean of one's own country however, country's component is not its connotation however, country's component is not its connotation but a sub-characteristics called 'Uplakshan' in Hindi. Accordingly, Swadeshi includes all indigenous things both abstract and concrete, namely, native language, wisdom, culture, dress and other products also. The core of the concept however is 'self-reliance and self-governances' (Sharma, 2003: 99).

According to Gandhiji, Swadeshi is spirit which dictates man to serve his next door neighbor to the exclusion of any other". He further states that: "The neighbour thus served had in his turn to serve his own neighbor". In this sense swadeshi is never exclusive. It recognizes the scientific limitations of human capacity for service.

Gandhiji had to take into consideration all these factors to devise a method by which the grinding poverty of the Indian masses could be mitigated, if not altogether removed. The only way was to review the swadeshi movement. The new movement had not only to solve the problem of consumption but also that of production. After all, it is production which would increase the quantum of employment. The object of the movement during the time of the partition agitation was defeated by the Indian mill owners. As the demand increased, they increased the price of cloth and did even passed off foreign cloth as made in India. In this respect Gandhiji was put right by a patriotic mill owner in Bombay, who told him, "You are aware that in the days of partition (of Bengal) the mill owners fully exploited the swadeshi movement. When it was at its height, they raised the price of cloth and did even worse things. We are not conducting our business out of philanthropy. We do it profit (Kripalani, 2005: 381).

The principle of Swadeshi demands that a person must give preference to local manufacturers even if they are of inferior quality or more costly than articles of foreign make, they should try to search remedy these defects but not give up the use of those things. This is true Swadeshi, is thus very helpful. There is no place for hatred for the foreign made things also. He did not reject a foreign made things simply because of its being foreign, he gladly used foreign made things but only when there were no Indian substitute for them and it would have been a criminal waste of time and energy to try to produce them locally, for such Swadeshi sometimes he used old swadeshi and new swadeshi, i.e. in old swadeshi goods must be produced in India and village and cottage industries must produce alternative goods for foreign swadeshi which is hundred percent Indian.

4) Sarvodaya:

In economic terms, Sarvodaya would mean that everyone without any exception must be assured a

minimum standard of living, that is, a balanced diet, a decent house to live in, sufficient cloth and adequate educational and medical facilities. Provisioning of the minimum necessities of life for the masses is economic Swaraj which negatively speaking implies absence of all exploitation, deprivation and oppression. Gandhiji's attention was, however, especially captured by the last one on the socio-economic ladder, that is, the hungry, the poor, the exploited and the down-trodden. "The Swaraj of my dream is the poor man's until basic amenities are granted to the poorest of the poor. In Gandhian view the principle of welfare means maximum of moral welfare and material welfare should be fulfilled. In Gandhian development model, exploitation, disparity or deprivation are not allowed.

5) Gandhi and Globalization:

Gandhi is a global man, universal thinker, world leader committed to the philosophy of Ahimsa which he popularized through intense practice. His entire life is transparent and truthful in implementing what he preached. Hence he is a global thinker for the up-liftment of common man. He advised people to keep all the windows of the house (life) open so that noble thoughts would fill them and inspire to make individuals grow and glow prosperous with new, innovative and prosperous ideas. Gandhi at the same time cautioned people not to be blown off the ground (where he is living). He wanted villagers to gain modern knowledge and skills to obtain higher productivity and production from cultivation or any occupation being practiced by them. In other words he encouraged positive aspects of globalization, privatization and liberalization and advocated and addressed governments to protect the farmer and villagers including craftsman from the ill effects of globalization policies like market exploitation, trade malpractices, illegal competition and excessive subsidization and tariff barriers being practiced by developed countries. His firm view was that in the absence of protection of farmers and craftsman by government, from the ill and evil effects of globalization to selfishly protect their client citizens interests at the cost of developing countries farmers; the Indian village system will collapse having delirious effect on the Indian economy as the back bone (village economy) weakness and loses shine. The same is happening in India due to world Trade organization policies of heavy protection of developed economies, particularly farmers and their produce.

6) Trusteeship:

Trusteeship was the economic term. All wealth, for Gandhi, should be treated as a national trust. Gandhi got the idea during the train journey from Johannesburg to St. Martizburg while reading Raskin's 'unto this last'. The phoenix farm settlement and the Tolstoy farms were based on the principle of trusteeship. Gandhi said there should be minimum wage and ceiling on maximum the capitalist property. Minimum has no meaning unless there is a ceiling on maximum. All economists today agree that trusteeship is the practical solution of present day malpractices in property and misdistribution of wealth. In fact trusteeship is the only way to end capitalism without ending the capitalist who could be a trustee of his own wealth for his own household express he would be entitled to a reasonable share.

It was not Gandhi India to rob the rich or the rajas and the Maharajas to lead a life of penury. He only told them to voluntarily renounce their ownership. Why cannot the head of the state tell his subjects that they are the real owners of the state property which is the only way to achieve socialism through democratic and non-violent means?

CONCLUSION:

Gandhian economics based on a holistic paradigm and ethical values like truth, non-violence, non-stealing, non-possession, Brahmacharya, equality, bread labour, swadeshi and trusteeship, shows a radical departure from modern economics, Gandhiji equates 'well being' or happiness of man with spiritual or moral elevation, and therefore, maintains that the basic goal of economics is not pursuit of unbounded materialism, but provision of optional amount of goods and services in order to keep the body and mind in a fit condition so that though service, the highest potentiality of man may be realized. Truth requires that wants should be scientifically explored, pruned and regulated in the light of wholeness. Gandhian economic is, therefore, need oriented and not want oriented. Besides fulfillment of needs, Sarvodaya, equality, end of all deprivation and exploitation, creative work for all are some of the other basic 'ends' of holistic economics.

Development must be equitable if it is to be sustainable. The time has come to distinguish development sharply from exclusive growth. A 'careful transition' from agriculture to industry, with people support will be a model. The transition from agriculture to industry was inevitable in capitalist or socialist society. It would not be able to hold on to agricultural success unless industries were developed.

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