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**Address:-Ashok Yakkaldevi 258/34, Raviwar Peth, Solapur - 413 005 Maharashtra, India
Cell : 9595 359 435, Ph No: 02172372010 Email: ayisrj@yahoo.in Website: www.isrj.net**



ECONOMIC IDEAS OF MAHATMA GANDHI



Sangram Chavan

Associate Professor Walchand College of Arts & Science, Solapur.

Abstract: Mahatma Gandhi is known as 'Father of Nation'. History of Indian independence is in a way the life history of Mahatma Gandhi. Before studying the economic ideas of Mahatma Gandhi it may be worthwhile to take note of certain formative influences. Gandhiji was greatly influenced by Tolstoy and Ruskin. 'The Kingdom of God within You' by Tolstoy and 'Unto this Last' by Ruskin has a profound influence on Gandhiji. From the philosophy of Tolstoy he derived the concepts of egalitarianism, simplicity, and asceticism, which later on became the foundation of his economic ideas. Further the idea of 'Bread Labour' popularized by Tolstoy influenced Gandhiji and strengthened his conviction that machine technology should be avoided. This concept of 'Bread Labour' made Gandhiji believe that a man who did not do body labour had no right to eat. From Ruskin he developed distaste for material progress. Anarchists like prince Kropotkin developed in Gandhi, hatred against concentration of economic and political power. The present research paper tries to analyse the economic ideas of Mahatma Gandhi.

Keywords: Gandhian Economics, human values, ethics, dignity of labour, trusteeship, khadi, village industries, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi is never known to the people as an economist. Although he has expressed some views on economics, he has not expressed those as economic thoughts. His economics did not represent any particular economic school of thought. Some times it looks to be socialistic on the other hand some times it seems to be capitalistic. Mahatma Gandhi is neither a socialist nor the capitalist. He is rather a rationalist. His economics is based on the human values. He talks about the inner voice. People categorise his economics as Gandhian Economics but he himself rejected his economic thoughts to be called as Gandhian Economics.

Gandhian economics is based on ethical foundation. He has advocated human values. He has more emphasizes on human rationality. He believes in the transformation by heart. He was against compulsion and regulation. It is the reason; he has never talks about the reduction of economic inequality. He has never criticizes capitalism. He was never against machinery and technology but he is having different approach regarding use of it. He is also having the different approach regarding reduction of economic inequality.

Use of machinery-

Mahatma Gandhi was never against the use of machinery & modern technology. He was against the machine and technology which leads to unemployment in the country. He was on the side of labour intensive technology. His charkha was the symbol of dignity of labour. According to him every work done with honesty is of equal importance. He believes that charkha will create a revolution in India. Charkha is the only solution for the problem of rising unemployment due to increasing population. It was the reason, he had emphasizes on khadi and village and industry.

Khadi and village industry was the central point of Gandhian economics. He had advocated the concept of Gram Swarajya. Gandhiji opposed modern capitalism because it is based on the exploitation of human labour. According to him morale progress is more important than material progress.

Inequality of Income & Wealth-

Mahatma Gandhi was having different view regarding inequality of income and wealth. He was not supposed to be the strong critics of inequality. According to him concentration of wealth up to some extent is inevitable. If some one accumulated wealth on his own efficiency and hard work it is desirable according to him. He says that poor people should not envy rich people because they are reach and rich people should not be proud of their richness. Rich people should act as a trustee. They should make use of their wealth for the welfare of the society. In this way Mahatma Gandhi has coined the concept of trusteeship. He himself believes in simple living. He has never accumulated any type of wealth in his life. He has scarified his entire life for the freedom of India and for the betterment of the society.

Khadi and Village Industry-

Khadi and village industry is the base of Gandhian economics. He was the strong advocator of khadi and village industry. He believes that many of the Indian problems can be resolved by adopting khadi and village industry. Khadi and village industry can provide employment to lacs of people in India. Khadi and village industry helps in the decentralization of industries in India. Khadi and village industry will not require any foreign capital. It will create self esteem. He believes in the labour intensive technology.

Capitalism and Socialism-

Many people confused about whether Mahatma Gandhi was capitalist or socialist. In fact Gandhiji was neither a capitalist nor a socialist. He criticizes capitalism because it leads to class conflict. There is class conflict between capitalist and workers in capitalism. Capitalism also leads to centralization of power and wealth. He believes that there is exploitation of workers in capitalism.

Capitalism will not solve the problems of the poor class. Profit is the prime motive in capitalism. Capitalism leads to industrial dispute. It creates monopoly of the industrialists. On the other hand he also criticizes socialism because in socialism there is no freedom for the people. Socialism, although it seems to be better than capitalism so far as welfare of the people is concerned, it also has some demerits. In socialism concentration of power is in the hands of government. Socialism is based on violence because of which Gandhiji criticizes socialism. Socialism leads to equality but it can be achieved by force and violence. Gandhiji believe in the transformation of mind for achieving equality and eradication of casteism in India. It is the reason; Gandhiji advocated the path of democracy for India. He has coined the concept of gramswaraj.

Welfare of the People-

Gandhiji believes in the spirituality. According to him spiritual development is more important than material welfare. Money is merely a medium of exchange it is not the ultimate aim of life. If one has to achieve satisfaction in life, he has to reduce his wants. According to him as wants increases dissatisfaction also increases. He believes in simple living. He has worshiped non violence and truth. According to him truth provides peace of mind. It increases mental strength.

He was against accumulation of wealth. He believes in equality. According to him wealth is a cause of all misery. Human welfare can be achieved by the spiritual development.

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SANGRAM CHAVAN
Associate Professor Walchand College of Arts
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