

Gandhian Perspective of Development

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ABSTRACT

We are living in an age in which the major concerns of people are Facebook, WhatsApp, e-mail, e-commerce, sensex, gross domestic product, markets, dividends, globalisation, horse-trade politics, and such other aspects of commerce, economics, development, and politics. In such a stage, where does the value-based development, purity of means and ends, production by the masses instead of mass production, truth, non-violence, non-possession, gender equality, austerity in life, etc. preached by our Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, stand? The world has changed drastically in its inner and outer spheres; the life rhythm has turned totally in its core. In such a time, the ideals of Gandhian teaching seem 'utopian' and superficial to the new-gen, high-tech civilised individuals and groups. This work contains a detailed study of the prevalent development strategies and their drawbacks and lapses that make the situation more aggravating. It also analyses the Gandhian prescriptions for development and their significance in the modern world.

Keywords: Development; Gandhian teaching; Study of development; Study of development.

INTRODUCTION

Study of development is one of the newest, most exciting and most challenging branches of the broader disciplines of economics and philosophy. Development is not uniform and one concept cannot apply everywhere across the globe. Its application varies in different countries and different regions. Yet, there is some underlying universal truth of development that is common to all. Although one can claim that Adam Smith was the earliest 'development economist' and that his book *Wealth of Nations* (1776) was the first treatise on economic development, the systematic study of the problems and processes of economic development in the Third World has emerged only after the two world wars.

Until 1913, the classical model of development based on industrialization ruled in the West. The main problems before the economists and planners were linked with the question of how economically backward countries can overcome their backwardness and move on the path of economic advancement. Development economists propounded numerous theories and ideas in this regard, but still so called developing countries suffer from economic backwardness and poverty. Hence, serious objections against such concepts of development have been raised from different corners, and there is a widespread tendency to acknowledge a sustainable growth model in economics applicable in all scenarios.

Development based on the principles of human dignity, equality, and social justice can be defined as a goal and process that aims to achieve an integrated, balanced and unified (social and economic) development of society. In fact, social

development means something more than merely economic and political progress.

PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE OF DEVELOPMENT

We shall discuss here the questions raised against mal-development and elucidate in detail the philosophical interpretation of development and its sustainability. Philosophically, development is a process by which one's overall personality is enhanced. This is so for society as well as for the individual. For society, the individual identity is collective. Thus, development for society means development of the collective personality of society. Development of collective personality requires physical, material and economic development, but it is above all the development and the application of consciousness.

A child may grow physically without contacting any other individual if he gets food and nourishment in time. But he will develop personally only through meaningful interaction with society. So, even if economic development is a necessity, it alone cannot be treated as an independent variable detached from its social bearings. Development, therefore, is defined as a multi-vitiate quantitative and qualitative change.

Thus, the concept of development refers to the kind of society that one aims to build. For this, development policies which concentrate on relieving 'absolute poverty' or on meeting 'basic needs' are properly to be adopted as a matter of priority. However, they should not be seen as policy goals in themselves. Moreover, we can satisfy basic human needs permanently only with the necessary structural changes at local, national and international levels. This would enable those concerned to identify their own needs, mobilize their own resources and shape their future in their own terms.

Development should be understood as a process designed progressively to create the conditions in which every person can enjoy, exercise and utilize, under the rule of law, all the human rights- economic, social, cultural, civil or political (Overton, 2006). Every person has the right to participate in and benefit from development in the sense of a progressive improvement in the standards and quality of life. The right to development is to be implemented not only by development aid but by removing the asymmetry and imbalance in economic relations.

The contrast between the enormous growth in production and productivity in the world in the last few decades and the reality of the destitution of so many people has been due to certain myths about the relationship between the states and the citizens. Policy makers believe that a certain platform of economic growth will solve the miseries of poverty and that the western style of modernization is the designated path of development.

In reality, development without people's participation is not genuine development. Assistance will lead to true development only if there is a 'political will' obtained by consensus, for its proper utilization. In most cases, common people are far removed from policy making and implementation with the result that aid has often been channeled for personal gain or for repression. Development from the top to bottom is the usual procedure adopted by the authorities worldwide. This, in turn, widens the gap between the poor and rich (Rondinelli 2013).

In fact, development of a society is the process in which ‘economic’ and ‘non-economic’ elements interact organically with each other. Attempts to isolate the economic elements and fit them into a hypothetical model of ‘economic development’ are therefore unscientific. It would be futile to attempt to measure any country’s social development quantitatively and expect consensus on it. The world’s richest society may be the sickest and hence not developed at all. Such positions can be understood but cannot be refuted, and yet scientific judgments may be given on such a basis.

An inquiry into the nature and causes of the Wealth of Nations by Adam Smith laid the foundation of modern economics. Great Britain, which pioneered the Industrial Revolution, was the first to adopt capitalist system of development. It was followed by several other countries in the West in the latter half of the 19th century. Adam Smith grasped the revolutionary significance of the basic structural changes that were taking place in the spheres of production and supply and in the whole economic system. He gave cohesive shape to various economic ideas and presented them in the form of the *Principles of Economics* governing the new economic system based on division of labour, specialization, standardization of production, mass-production, demand and supply, competition etc (Mittelman, 1995). Economy was conceived as based on the operation of market forces and free enterprise. Smith assumed that self-interest is the basic motive for the acquisition of economic power that the total economic effort is for social good, and that, ultimately, the whole complex of economic processes works for the best. Hence, Smith is recognized as the prophet of free enterprise.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) inquired into the causes of mass poverty and growing disparities in income and wealth in the midst of plenty in the countries which had adopted the capitalistic system. He wrote a critique of capitalism-*Das Capital*-which was published in 1867. While complimenting capitalism for economic miracles, he criticized the system of the private ownership of the means of production and distribution which, according to him, was responsible for the exploitation of masses by the few, who owned them. In the capitalist system, according to Marx, class conflict makes the rich become richer and the poor poorer. He therefore advocated forcible overthrow of capitalism by a revolution spearheaded by the proletariat through organized action, and the establishment of a socialistic order which would end class conflict and built a classless society. Karl Marx thus laid the foundation of scientific socialism, which he anticipated to be the forerunner of Communism.

The ideas of Adam Smith were developed by other economists in the 19th and 20th centuries and those of Karl Marx by Lenin and others. These ideas influenced the further course of development – economic, political and social- in the 19th and 20th centuries. Mahatma Gandhi, too, in the first quarter of the 20th century, inquired into the causes of widespread poverty in India, the exploitation of the masses by a few, and took note of the side effects of industrialization under the capitalist system. As a solution, instead of mass-production, he advocated production by the masses. Gandhi felt that neither capitalism nor communism would solve the basic problems of individual and society. He, therefore, formulated an entirely new approach to socio-economic development in which

man would be at the centre.

Gandhi presented alternative ideas and strategies for implementing them that had laid the foundation of what we call the Gandhian approach. But Gandhi himself said that there is no such thing as Gandhism. He did not want to leave any such legacy after him. He did not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. He simply tried in his own way to address the truth of daily life and problems. He, therefore, like the other two, viz., Adam Smith and Karl Marx, did not present his ideas in the form of a comprehensive scholarly treatise. Gandhi was not only engaged in the freedom struggle but also got interested in and promoting socio-economic developments, which he referred as Constructive Work.

Gandhi called himself a socialist and even a communist, but for him socialism and communism were the transcendental forms of an egalitarian social philosophy that find their fulfillment and culmination in *Sarvodaya* (the rise or the welfare of all).¹ For Gandhi, the conception of the end justifying the means is dangerous in practice and unsound ethically. That is why, even if socialism and communism are basically idealistic, the difference between communism and Gandhian economics are far more basic and deep-rooted. Communism advocates a violent technique for a change over in favour of an egalitarian society. Gandhian developmental theory, on the contrary, focuses on persuasion and change of heart. Gandhian approach avoids the evils of legislative or legal coercion in democratic socialism and the physical coercion involved in communism. Gandhi was concerned with the welfare of all and hence rejected the view that welfare can be attained by physical, intellectual and moral coercion perpetrated by a section of the people against the rest of the community.

Gandhian concept of development

Affluence as a goal of development was not in Gandhi's mind. He believed that there is sufficient to meet the needs of people, but not to their greed. He, therefore, refused to accept any move towards affluence as the goal of a society. The type of development that had been achieved in Europe was the result of a systematic colonization and exploitation of both people and nature. Gandhi, therefore, rejected not only the supportive mechanism of development such as bureaucracy, technology and elitist education but also the whole idea of development as conceived by the builders of the industrial society (Snauwaert, 1993). His opposition to this approach should be understood in relation to his philosophy of development, which is closely linked with his philosophy of life. As a great unifier not only of persons but also of ideas, Gandhian philosophy declares that social, economic and political ideas are all interrelated and interdependent. It is explained thus:

The ultimate social order envisioned by the Gandhian Economic Theory will have as its goal, the promotion of happiness of all material as well as non-material, which comes through general acceptance of higher values of life, self-realization, which consists in destroying the ego and regarding his own interest as identical with that of others. All economic and political activity will be spiritualized. The creed of the multiplication of wants as the spur to economic activity characteristic of the present day capitalist economies and

materialistic outlook, state control and indifference to purity of means characteristic of socialist economies are both highly regarded as the bane of modern civilization (Singh, 2006, p. 77).

GANDHI HOLISTIC VIEW

Gandhi had a holistic view of social and economic development. The holistic paradigm takes ends and means to be the two sides of the same coin in contrast to the fragmentary world view which separates them and justifies the achievement of ends by any means. According to Gandhian philosophy, means and ends are convertible terms; the achievement of ends is in direct proportion to the means adopted. As Gandhi had expressed, 'they say 'means are after all means', I would say 'means are after all everything'. Hence, there is no wall of separation between means and end. 'Indeed the creator has given us control (and that too very limited) over means, none over the end. Realization of the goal is exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception' (Khimta, 2019, p. 32). Ends are the outcome of the means, and so Gandhi wrote, 'the means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the ends as there is between the seed and the tree' (Khimta, 2019, p. 35).

Truth is the end and non-violence, that is action arising out of truth, is the means to realize it. Violent means embedded in untruth will ultimately lead to violence only. Truth cannot be realized by untruth. Gandhi, therefore, pronounced 'truthful conduct alone can reach truth'. He undoubtedly rejects the approach of democratic socialism and communism, which lacks the moral purity that is necessary to achieve the end.

Economic ends which are centered in truth must also be achieved only by non-violent and truthful means. The truth of the wholeness of life must not be violated in anyway. Gandhian economic philosophy therefore emphasizes the achievement of economic ends by holistic means. Policies and methods devised to achieve the truthful economic ends must never become an instrument of violence against nature, man and society, which are the inseparable elements of the holistic plan. The means adopted to achieve the economic ends have, thus, constraints not only economic but also holistic. For this, every individual must purify oneself.

Gandhi believed that instead of man exploiting the society and both exploiting nature, there is a way of life which brings about the harmony between them. In his frame of reference for development, man is the centre of attention. The objective is the moral and spiritual development of man. Man is primarily his consciousness, his capacity to be self-conscious and his inbuilt capacity to judge between good and evil, between what will help him in his evolution to higher levels of being and what will obstruct his path. This gives him a leverage, not only to aspire after higher levels but to endeavor to attain the same. Gandhi believed in this self-effort and the path he outlined combines the material, moral and spiritual disciplines.

The key-note of Gandhian ethics is love, which means near identity or interest with every sentiment. This love has to be expressed in the form of service and sacrifice. His ethics in relation to material things and property consisted in his concept of trusteeship. Every human being is a trustee not only of his faculties and

attainments but of everything he comes by, and trusteeship consists not only in using his powers and goods properly, but in using them selflessly and for the well-being of all others.

As a man of action, Gandhi tried to work out the means to achieve his desired end, the *Sarvodaya Samaj* - the new society of his thinking. Gandhi was not merely a man of ideas. He could not rest by merely enunciating his idea of development. He tried to practise it. Based on his own experiments, he worked out the details regarding a wide variety of things which he named 'Constructive Programme' and which he considered as vital for building a new society.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Gandhi's constructive programme, which we have discussed in the first chapter, had taught India and the world, a new social philosophy based on non violence and sustainable development. Sustained development makes emphasis on needs and not on demands and it is the form of development which would meet the needs of the present generation without compromising on the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability is a term used in economics in different senses. The dictionary word 'sustainability' means a thing that can be kept up, maintained or prolonged. We cannot sustain a victory obtained through violence without further violence. That means we can sustain any social victory only if we achieve that through non-violence. This is the essence of the Gandhian concept of sustainable development. Thus, sustainable development achieved through non-violent means is the development that lasts.

The ideal society visualised by Gandhi, therefore, is not a materially or economically affluent society, as conceived by mainstream economists and political leaders afflicted by the development mania. It is a society that ensures the welfare and wellbeing of all its members. Decentralisation- social, political and economic- has a prominent place in such society. Its emphasis is on all the three components of well-being- material-mental, moral and spiritual. In such a conceptualisation, wealth is defined as relational rather than as material. So, the relevance of Gandhi is more valid nowadays than ever before, in the era of greed, consumerism and violence. It is because of greed and violence, natural resources decrease day by day.

We have a long tradition of spiritual views. Gandhi's thought is a continuation of that. His idea of sustainable development is based on simple living and the will to sacrifice. Gandhi believed in all-inclusive growth and he asserted that India can become a great nation when its impoverished rural masses become better off. He felt that India must follow decentralized rural development for a strong and harmonious future.

GANDHIAN TRINITY OF DEVELOPMENT

The three pillars of Gandhian model of decentralized rural development are Sarvodaya, Swadeshi and Swaraj. During the days of freedom movement itself, Gandhi had been working on the ideas for a new social order for post-colonial India. He believed that there would be no point in getting rid of the British without getting rid of the centralised, exploitative and violent system of governance and the economics of greed that they pursue. Gandhi designed a new trinity to achieve his vision of a new non-

violent and non- exploitive social order based on truth. He called this; Sarvodaya, Swaraj and Swadeshi (SSS). The first of the trinity is Sarvodaya, the ‘uplift of all’. ‘All rise’- not a few, as in capitalism, not even the greatest good of the greatest number as in socialism, but each and every individual should be taken care of; that is Sarvodaya. This includes the care of the Earth - of animals, forests, rivers and land. Gandhi’s vision is better encapsulated in the concept of biocracy (where the interests of all living beings, including non-human species, local and global ecosystems, and future generations are taken into account, because their interest is our interest) rather than democracy.

Gandhi adopted the second aspect of the trinity as Swaraj or ‘self-government’. Swaraj works to bring about a social transformation through small- scale, decentralised, self-organised and self directed participatory structures of governance (Vorster, 2012). It also implies self-transformation, self-discipline and self-restraint. Thus Swaraj is a moral, ethical, ecological and spiritual concept and therefore a ‘satvic’ (based on Truth) method of governance. The third part of the trinity is Swadeshi or ‘local economy’. Gandhi opposed mass production, favouring production by the masses. Work for him is as much a spiritual necessity as an economic one. So he insisted on the principle that every member of society should be engaged in manual work. Manufacturing in small workshops and adherence to arts and crafts feeds the body as well as the soul, he said. He believed that long-distance transportation of goods, competitive trading and relentless economic growth destroy the fabric of human communities. Within the context of Sarvodaya, Swaraj and Swadeshi, taking care of each other and caring for the Earth, constantly and regularly, development emerges meaningfully.

Sarvodaya –The alternative

Gandhi’s personality was many sided. During his times, the condition of India was quite miserable with numerous deep rooted evils. A degenerated society with political, economic and social imbalance was there. Extreme poverty was widespread. The evils like caste-conflicts, child-marriages, practising of *Sati*, wearing of *Purda*, denial of education to woman, dowry system, polygamy, corruption, exploitation etc. were rampant. Gandhi tried to retrieve the moral and physical health of such a decadent society. For that, he preached the Sarvodaya theory.

‘The Gandhian philosophy of Sarvodaya can be traced to the central teachings of India’s spiritual and religious heritage although Gandhi admits the fact that he had immediate inspiration from Ruskin’s *Unto This Last* of which the term Sarvodaya is his rendering’ (Vorster, 2012). The central teaching of ‘*Unto this Last*’ according to Gandhi are:

- (i). That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
- (ii). That a lawyer’s work has the same values as the barber’s in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
- (iii). That a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

Gandhi was very much influenced by Tolstoy. Tolstoy's ideals of simplicity in life and purity of purpose influenced Gandhi deeply. His views on Christianity, its church and teachings roused Gandhi's feelings. Tolstoy accepted love as the law of life. The principle of non-violence is based on love for the entire humankind. Tolstoy and Gandhi both adopted the instrument of love to solve all problems in their life. In the celebrated book *The Kingdom of God is within You*, we find a political force that created an indelible mark on Gandhi.

Thoreau was the champion of free spirit and was repelled by the established political and economic authority of his time. In him, we discover an element of moral individualism culminating in his concept of 'Civil Disobedience'. But it is *Bhagavad Gita*, which provided Gandhi with the primary strength and inspiration. To Gandhi, Gita is the 'Eternal Mother'. According to him, self-realization and its means is the theme of the Gita'. Again he affirms, 'to one who reads the spirit of Gita, it teaches the secret of non-violence, the secret of realizing the self through physical body.

The first verse of *Isovasyopanishad* refers to the concept of Sarvodaya. It contains the principles of equality and fraternity. The second paragraph reveals the idea of renunciation, non-acquisitiveness and service to the society. According to Gandhi, since the entire universe is pervaded by God, the verse preaches the philosophy of equality and fraternity, which are the fundamental principles of the welfare of all. He confirms, 'Universal brotherhood not only brotherhood of all human beings but of all living beings, I find in this mantra'.⁹ Buddhism with its idea of suffering, Jainism with its principle of non-violence and Islam with its ideal of brotherhood had also influenced Gandhi in developing the ideal of Sarvodaya.

Swaraj- the political order of Sarvodaya

Gandhi had depicted the political order of Sarvodaya state. Character would be the basis of Sarvodaya state and that is the essential implication of Swaraj. Swaraj in the wider sense means self-control of the individuals. One, who is capable of self-control, observes the rules of morality, does not cheat or give up truth, and does his duties to his parents, wife and children, servants and neighbors, no matter where he lives. A state enjoys Swaraj if it can boast of a large number of such good individuals. The ideal of Swaraj finally applies to the self-discipline and self-reliance of each and every individual in society.

In a way, Sarvodaya as a political doctrine is positively anarchist. In fact, the political idea of Sarvodaya is anarchism of its own variety. It concedes that a fully stateless society can be established only by the human endeavour to reduce the power and sphere of the state to the minimum. It is based on *Lokaneeti* and not on *Rajaneeti*. *Lokaneeti* is a comprehensive term, which denotes simultaneously a way of life, a form of social order and a method. As a way of life, it stands for the self-regulation of individual conduct and for a habit to act on one's own initiatives (Kona Nayudu, 2017).

As a form of social order, Swaraj envisages a society in which police and military will have little to do, and they will interfere the least with the life of people. A man will have the utmost freedom of action. As a method it stands for social change in a manner that would maintain men's freedom of action. Swaraj is based on certain fundamental political assumptions:

- (i) All individuals are equally born.
- (ii) People are the custodians of the supreme power in the state.
- (iii) Political power should be decentralized both at individual and the village level.
- (iv) All must train themselves for self-rule.
- (v) All should believe in the divinity of every individual and strive for the welfare of all people.

Swadeshi- the economic order of Sarvodaya

Economic order of Sarvodaya consists of various elements. The basis of this economic order is non-violence. According to Gandhi, 'Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and therefore sinful' (Singh, 2006). True economics, according to Gandhi, 'stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally including the weakest and is indispensable for decent life'. He mainly wants to formulate such an economic constitution to both India and the world that no one suffers from want of food, clothing and shelter.

Gandhi argued that everyone is born equal and even if there is any incapability or deficiency for an individual, he/she also has the right to equal opportunity. According to him, people with talents would get more, but they must utilize their talents for the purpose of equal distribution. If the talented utilize their talents kindly, they would be performing the work of the state. Such people are the trustees (Singh, 2006). They would be allowed to work more but the bulk of their greater earnings must be used for the good of all, just as the income of all earning sons of a father goes to the common family.

In order to achieve the moral social order in Sarvodaya society, Gandhi put forward the action plan of Swadeshi. The basic elements in Swadeshi principle can be stated in the following two propositions:

- (i) An individual consumer will reduce his wants and reorder preference function such that it is made up mostly of goods produced in the neighborhood defined in terms of community.
- (ii) The consumer will cooperate with neighbor producer to produce the goods efficiently. The emphasis here is on cooperation between producer and consumer. Contrary to the existing situation where efficiency is determined by competition between producers, in Swadeshi efficiency is ensured via co-operation between the producer and consumer neighbor.

Sethi observes, 'The Swadeshi principle leads to a downward shift in the cost functions. Swadeshi implies total self-reliance in all domains of life. It follows from the concept of Swaraj. There are various interpretations of Swadeshi. Some interpret it narrowly as 'autarky' or self-sufficiency' (Trivedi, 2003). The question is how can we apply the concept of Swadeshi to a nation? The misunderstanding arises from this question itself. A more meaningful question is: How would Swaraj look like without Swadeshi? If Swadeshi is essential to Swaraj, then how does one go about introducing it in the transitional state? The interpretation of Swadeshi, as 'self-reliance, provides clue to this question well. Macro-economic implications of Swadeshi are obvious in reality. Swadeshi principle involves that the consumer neighbour encourages the producer neighbour to produce goods

efficiently (Trivedi, 2003). If one adds the activities of all such producers in community, two conclusions follow:

- (i) The community as a whole is able to produce virtually all the goods needed by it; unless, of course, such production is not possible for either technical or resource reasons.
- (ii) The community as a whole would reproduce all it can at the least social cost. After all, the producer neighbor has to ensure that the consumer neighbor can obtain the goods. Here is a precise observation:

The effect is that the community will have a surplus production. The validity of this fact is corroborated by a visit to such community anywhere in the world. It is not mere a thoughtless idea, that peasants and simple communities are able to share their production freely with the outsiders and visitors who visit them. The anthropologists have been particularly impressed by this fact and have commended them regularly (The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 1969, p. 2).

Non-possession

The principles implied in the concept of *Aparigraha* or voluntary dispossession is as follows: (i) the welfare of an individual person depends not only on consumption of commodities but also on service to fellow beings, (ii) the utility apace, defined by consumption of goods alone is limited. On the other hand, welfare obtainable from service is limited; (iii) the object is not to maximize utility or consumption goods. Being limited, maximization of utility is not a meaningful objective. The objective, instead, is to obtain a certain level of utility. The underlying principle is 'contentment' or 'enough' as against greed and 'more and more'. Accordingly, *Aparigraha* defines a demand relationship between price and consumption. However this demand function is somewhat different from that of a neo-classical demand function. In this demand function there are two limits given by a maximum and minimum consumption (Diwan, 1982). There is certain level, beyond which consumption that everyone will obtain whether the person has income or not.

Aparigraha follows from truth and non-violence. It involves that a person should not possess anything that one does not need. The Gandhian concept of theft is based on *Aparigraha*. Accordingly, anyone who possesses things and objects not needed by oneself but needed by others is a theft. This is an essential concept of *Swaraj* because it brings it to the most coveted state: 'to each according to his need'. This also implies institutional reforms. The whole concept of private ownership of property- where property is distinguished from tools- comes under sharp criticism. It is obvious that non- possession is not compatible with capitalism. Clearly, the concept of *Aparigraha* implies the strongest denunciation of capitalist system.

Decentralisation and economy

For Gandhi, ideal society would be possible only when there is a decentralized ruling system. Gandhi consciously declared himself in favour of decentralisation. Many economists considered and discarded Gandhi as utopian, obsolete, out of date and out of tune with the modern concepts of development. Some even questioned the rationale and operational feasibility of the Gandhian concept of decentralisation. They felt it was like swimming against the current.

For Gandhi, a decentralized economic system of production and distribution could ensure a fuller and proper utilisation of human and material resources. He believed that agriculture, by its very nature, would remain a decentralised activity carried out through co-operative effort. After the industrial revolution in Europe, the entire social order underwent a thorough change. The industrial revolution opened the gates of prosperity for the whole society. In the feudal social order, only a few were able to enjoy the fruits of prosperity. Karl Marx, the doyen of the Communist movement, in his famous Communist Manifesto (1848) paid rich tributes to capitalism for carrying the fruits of development to the doorsteps of the people. However, the rapid industrialisation, which followed the industrial revolution in Europe and in other parts of the world, led to unplanned urbanisation, and slums were an integral part of urban growth. There was an overall fall in moral values.

It has been proved that excessive centralisation results in the erosion of demand and periodically creates an imbalance between supply and demand. The determinants of the economy are concentrated in the manufacture of different products and their production increases. The balance between production and supply is disturbed, because centralisation accelerates the tempo of production. Therefore, economic centralisation, which inevitably results in loss of balance between production and supply, is bound to collapse. At the stage of higher development, a delicate situation arises when a minor technical error or poor judgement by an individual of a situation is enough to destroy the system. The safety valves in the economy also fail to work. Normally, to avoid such a catastrophe, capitalist countries either engineer wars or take to costly programmes- outer space exploitation, for example- to keep the economy going. However, they only postpone the final doomsday.

Even in socialist countries, problems have become complex because of centralisation. In many socialist economies, state capitalism has emerged. These economies also suffer from many of the defects of the centralised capitalistic system. In recent years, the thinkers in those countries have been exploring the possibilities of economic decentralisation. They, too, are of the opinion that unless the individual is motivated and the decision-making power of an individual is honoured, the economic system would not gather the required momentum. In some measure, even in socialistic societies, there is need for competition. It is also necessary to improve quality. Human and material resources can be used effectively under a system of competition and decision making.

Gandhi's theory of development, in a way, forecasts all these problems and suggests a way to deal with them effectively. From the beginning itself, he advocated the decentralised economy with man at its central point; man with full competent power in his soul.

Panchayat Raj system

Gandhi's Panchayat Raj system is a step towards the direction of political decentralisation. The process of economic decentralisation should be accompanied by political decentralization. So, Gandhi emphasized the role of Panchayats as the system of village governance which he called Village Swaraj or Panchayat Raj. The basic idea behind Panchayat Raj is to raise a smallest unit of

governance at the bottom of popular democracy. It is true that Gandhi did not present a full-fledged blueprint of village governance, but he visualized its basic parameters. He outlined his idea of village governance in the following words:

The Government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office... I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighboring villages and the centre if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government (Rao, 2017, p. 55).

Gandhi emphasized the function of the Panchayat to revive honesty and industry. The main role of the Panchayats is to teach the villagers to avoid disputes. This will ensure speedy justice at the minimum cost. There is no need of the police or military.

Gandhi envisaged Panchayats to manage and properly nurture the soil of agriculture fields of the villages in order to increase the quantity of foodstuff. He designed the work of panchayats also to protect our indigenous games and cultures. According to him, Panchayat representatives can control and stop the use of intoxicating drinks and drugs from the village life. The evil of untouchability can be eradicated through the proper functioning of panchayats. 'Then the Panchayat should see to cattle improvement. They should show steady increase in the milk yield'.

If the power is delegated to lower bodies like this, to plan and implement policies and if resources are made available, we will get, what is known as participating democracy, Panchayat Raj. People's participation in economic development would lay the foundation of state democracy and would ensure integrated and total development of man and society. This argument is more valid now because there is a growing realisation that there is excessive centralisation in the Indian economy both in planning and implementation.

Fundamental difference

From these, it is evident that Gandhian approach to economic development is different from the other two main approaches, viz., of capitalism and socialism. As stated earlier, Gandhi did not present his ideas on economic development in the form of a documented treatise. Nor did he use the statistics to prove his point. While experimenting with truth, Gandhi came across some economic issues for which he proposed his own solutions. Naturally, as a man in constant search for truth, he grew with times. As a sequel to it, he had to change his views and course of action. Unhesitatingly, he discarded the ideas which he later found to be wrong and openly owned his mistakes. Again, Gandhi was perhaps the only thinker who attempted to practise, what he preached; and that has given a unique flavour to his ideas.

Evaluating Gandhi's concepts and notions on social development, we can

summarize some fundamental aspects of his vision of an ideal social order, which are following:

- (i) **Harmony with nature:** Gandhi considered the development of man in the context of his surroundings and environment- nature, soil, trees, livestock, water, climate etc. The developed countries have now realized the importance of maintaining the ecological balance, protection of environment, use of local resources, especially non-conventional and inexhaustible resources, conservation of forests, saving the land from soil erosion and the use of chemical fertilizers, reducing pollution of air and water and the need for avoiding unnecessary movement of raw materials and finished goods.
- (ii) **Use of non-conventional resources and their renewal:** Gandhi laid stress on the use of non-conventional sources of energy and other resources; their renewal and on the use of solar energy, wind mills, tidal, hydraulic and biogas energy, etc, as well as tree-borne oilseeds for soap manufacture, palm trees for obtaining sweetening agents, beekeeping, use of fibrous materials, recycling of wastes, converting waste into wealth etc.
- (iii) **Avoiding dependence on government:** Nowadays people look at governments for the solution of their problems. This has sapped initiative and urge for hard work. It is necessary to involve people in the formulation of the plan and its execution. Gandhi believed in self-help and effective role of local bodies, village panchayats, municipalities and voluntary agencies.
- (iv) **Development of appropriate technology:** It has been realized that by increasing the scale of production, the problems become more and more complex. There is the need for descaling technology. It has also been found that appropriate technology would be more cost-effective than large-scale technology in many respects.
- (v) **Social cost and social benefit:** It has not been possible to quantify social cost and social benefit and make it measurable with the economic cost and economic benefit and use it in the decision making process. It has been accepted that centralization in any form is coercive and harmful. The government has to take steps to encourage the dispersal of industry to achieve rural industrialization.
- (vi) **Moral aspects:** There is a growing awareness that the fruits of development can be reaped by the poor only when the programmes of development are accompanied by human resource development which envisages raising the quality of individual life by proper education, work habits, mode of behavior, consciousness of the importance of health and hygiene, etc. The state cannot shrink its responsibility for the ill effects of social vices. In other words, modern societies have also recognized the moral element of the Gandhian approach. Thus, Gandhian economic thought appears to be very logical and practical.

However, it suffers from the following deficiencies:

- (i) Gandhi was not an economist in any professional sense. His economic ideas lack systematization, and lay scattered here and there in his writings. He attempted no economic analysis and presented no theoretical model.
- (ii) In fact, Gandhi had not studied the writings of the western economists.
He studied only Marx and that too later in his life during his detention in 1942. Whatever he wrote or said about economics was the natural outburst of his ethical and philosophical thought, and was not adopted from any book.

Despite the feeling that Gandhian philosophy is far behind our times, he must be credited for emphasizing the role of small scale industries and agriculture in the development of the Indian economy. Almost all economists recognize the importance of small scale industries, and the need for their decentralization in an overpopulated and rural based underdeveloped country. Gandhi correctly realized that in such an economy, reorganization and revitalization of agriculture is a pre-condition to economic development. Development has to evolve from the people.

CONCLUSION

The following points summarize the relevance of Gandhian approach today and tomorrow:

- (i) In any scheme of development, man should be at the centre.
- (ii) The decentralization of political power is futile without economic decentralization and economic decentralization is ineffective without decentralizing the technology in some major activities. A harmony between the large and small industry is essential for the health of both.
- (iii) A consideration of moral aspects is important in any scheme of development.
- (iv) A holistic and integrated systems approach should be made.
- (v) Smallness has inherent strength to sustain itself if linkages are provided. It has certain advantages over large units.
- (vi) The interests of producers, consumers and organization are complementary.
- (vii) The weakest in the community should receive priority for support services.
- (viii) A differential approach has to be adopted to protect the weakest and anything which is good for society.
- (ix) India's asset is its human resource. If it is not properly used, it may become a liability.
- (x) A long-term view of development has to be taken, for we owe our debt to posterity as well. Man has to make a judicious use of natural resources. The ecological balance should not be disturbed. The objective should be not to build islands of prosperity in the ocean of poverty, but to raise the overall level of the standard of living with a view to combating poverty.

Gandhi's emphasis on social and economic change is on the task of ensuring

inclusive growth. He wanted to get rid of centralized, unresponsive and unreceptive system of governance. Gandhi wanted to bring the needs of the poor into the focus of decision- makers and to eliminate forces that upset democracy, integrity, peace and solidarity. He believed that India's villages should be empowered to govern themselves and be self-reliant in every respect. A democracy based on *Grama Swaraj* would be resilient, dynamic and sustainable.

India, today, presents a pattern of growth, which has an inherent dimension of widening the inequality. If this inequality increases further, social displacement will result and it will be a major obstruction to higher growth. The present scenario shows a paradox where on the one hand, the GDP growth rate has been raising to 7-8 percent, but rural urban divide, regional divide and rich- poor divide have become evident. Gandhian Swaraj has the potential to bring about social transformation through small-scale, decentralized and participatory structure for governments. Gandhian vision of social empowerment through inclusive governance would help us to safeguard social, ethical and cultural values of people, which in turn would lead to building trust in their governments. Gandhi regarded inclusive growth as the most fundamental requirement for building a resurgent rural India through local self government. It will provide the essential means of empowering the disadvantaged to overcome their poverty and miseries.

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