

GANDHIAN ECONOMICS THOUGHTS

Increasing Relevance of the Mahatma:

A Study of Relevance of Gandhi's Ideas

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ABSTRACT

The Second of October returns once more reminding us of the person we all refer us the father of the nation. But having immersed his ashes in the Sangam and having paid tribute to him and proudly recorded the encomiums received from all corners of the world it seemed the debt we owed to him had been repaid. Nevertheless a nagging fear persisted that we had still not done full justice to him. So we decided to declare his birthday a national holiday, erected statues all over the country, named hundreds of roads after him and hung up his portraits in thousands of Government buildings and felt that we could relax and get on with the task of concentrating all power in the Delhi Durbar, enriching the courtiers around the masnad and building the brahmastra to frighten all our enemies.

Mahatma Gandhi's ideas are still highly relevant in this day and age, particularly during debates on development issues. one recalls his advice to policy- makers and others that whenever you are in doubt "recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him? will it restore him

to control over his own life and destiny?" Translated into tangible terms, the needs of the poorest people should receive the topmost priority in development planning.

The two most important challenges today are: protecting the environment; and meeting the basic needs of all. The Gandhi response to both challenges is simple and identical - release resources from the grip of the very rich so that the needs of the poor can be met.

The lifestyle of the richest is attractive, and so it soon becomes a model for others. Mahatma Gandhi had said clearly that this is a model not worth emulating because it is destructive to nature. Instead he tried throughout his life to experiment with low-cost food, farming, education and Medicare which could meet the needs of all.

The Environment

He challenged the well-entrenched concepts of what passed by the term "development", a task which must have been even more difficult in his time when development had not been impeded by the most damaging aspects of the environment, as we know them now.

While considering an alternative path of development, Gandhi was very clear on the point that it must not be based on exploitation. He wrote in 1929, "surely exploitation means usurpation. And usurpation can never be reconciled with spiritualism."

He was once asked whether he would like India to develop as much as Britain. He replied that Britain was such a small country but it required the

plunder of half the planet to bring about such development. Therefore, if a large country like India is to develop in the same manner it will probably require the plunder of several planets. But he was certain that even if these planets were available, he would never want this country to follow this path. He wrote in 1940: "I have no idea of exploiting other countries for the benefit of India. We are suffering from the poisonous disease of exploitation ourselves, and I would not like my country to be guilty of any such thing."

He went a step further and asked the rich to introspect how their wealth has come directly or indirectly from the exploitation of the poor.

One aspect of this exploitation, which particularly pained him, was the exploitation of villages by cities, of rural life by urban life. He wrote in 1927: "the half-a-dozen modern cities are an excrescence and serve, at the present moment, the evil purpose of draining the life-blood of the villages."

In 1936 he wrote in more specific terms: "little flour mills are ousting the chakki, oil mills the village ghani, rice mills the village deink, sugar mills the village gad-pans, etc. this displacement of village labour is impoverishing the villages sufficiently long, the villages will be destroyed without any further effort."

Mahatma Gandhi's views on machinery were not confined to a theoretical level. Perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, these views found practical application. They became an integral part of India's freedom movement.

In 1936 while evaluating the progress made by khadi, He wrote with some satisfaction: "the progress khadi has made in terms of the millions, though little in itself, is comparatively the largest of all the other single industries. It distributes yearly the largest amount as wages among the largest number of

wage-earners in the villages with the minimum of overhead charges, and every piece practically circulates among the people."

Benefits of khadi

an additional argument she advances is that khadi can help us to recover several hundred thousand hectares as urgently needed fertile land to grow food. The mills require long and medium staple cotton which need more fertile land, irrigation and chemicals.

On the other hand short- staple cotton needed for the charkha can be obtained on less fertile land some of which is not under cultivation at present and there is no need for agric-chemicals.

India, Gandhi And Relevance Of His Ideas In The New World

(1) In the whole world India is a country of its own kind. It is the only nation, which for centuries has been the centre of its knowledge and spiritualism, India has drawn the attention of the world. Its cultural values have left their deep impression on the whole world. India's prosperity and the way of life of its people have attracted many to it.

(2) Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, gave a new dimension to Ahimsa [non-violence]? an natural and highest human value, in theory and practice. As the best and true representative of Indian culture in his own time, Gandhi was a peacemaker's mentor. like other mentors of the world who were born from time-to-time on the Indian soil, Gandhi's ideas and practices became equally adaptable in his own time for millions of his own country on the one hand, and on the other they proved to be the guiding force for people of many countries of the world, in particular, they have provided guidance to those working for

freedom and justice. Moreover, they are fully capable of guiding the people today if they are applied accordingly and will continue to do so in the future.

"I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. in my search after truth i have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as i am in age, I have no feeling that i have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh."

it is clear that Gandhi's ideas, in spites of staying within the domain of non-violence, and even while adhering in search of truth, are dynamic. they can be refined to suit the present circumstances.

(III) Two thousand five hundred years ago, Gautama Buddha had said that every creation, every object/thing? movable or immovable? was subject to constant change. Beside Gautama Buddha other great men too ratified this reality, directly or indirectly. but, it was only Mahatma Gandhi, who, after Gautama Buddha, proved this reality directly on the strength of his actions, and, thus, made his ideas relevant during his own life time, and left the legacy of them as a guiding force for generations to come.

Gandhi laid emphasis on non-violence, therefore, in all situation non-violence must be used. but when all such means fail ,for protection of freedom and justice, if least possible violent means are applied in the largest public interest. it is not a disregard to the Gandhi an approach. freedom and justice were supreme for Mahatma Gandhi Therefore, he always advice to protect them if possible by non-violent means and if not by Ahimsa then by violent means. but such violence must be momentary and there should not be any ill will towards the rival. Gandhi's brief statement, 'intent behind the act' should remain the focus during the course of indulging in momentary violence.

Mahatma Gandhi was an Indian-born world's mentor. Great Indian Values, particularly the supreme value of ahimsa, were the basic of his ideas. particularly, he desired solutions for all problems through the means of non-violence his ideas based on non-violence are entirely important in the new .

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